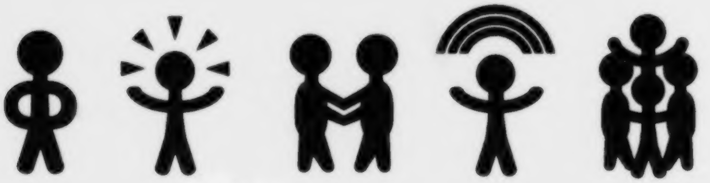
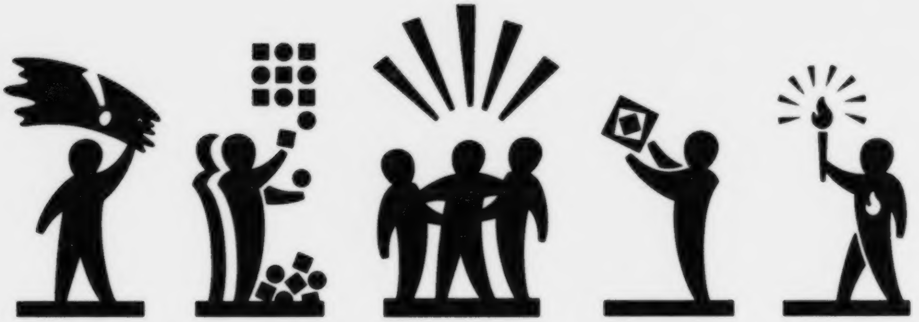


Grades 4 to 12

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



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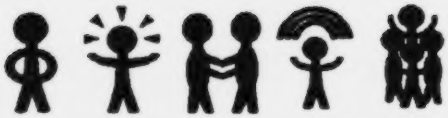

Grades 4 to 12

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List

2005

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www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/english/

Questions or concerns regarding this listing can be addressed to the Director, Learning and Teaching Resources Branch, Alberta Education. Telephone 780–427–2984. To be connected toll free inside Alberta dial 310–0000 first.

The primary intended audience for this document is:

Administrators	
Counsellors	
General Audience	
Parents	
Students	
Teachers	✓

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FOREWORD

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Titles for Grades 4–12

The Learning and Teaching Resources Branch of Alberta Education is proud to present the **new list** of authorized novels and nonfiction titles for grades 4–12.

- The grades 4–6 list is completely new—the first elementary novels and nonfiction list authorized by Alberta Education.
- The grades 7–9 list has been completely updated since the former 1990 list.
- The 1994 grades 10–12 list has been "refreshed" with seven to twelve new titles added for each senior high school course.

This annotated list provides short quotation summaries, suggested themes and literary features. It also identifies potentially sensitive issues. This list also includes video titles that have been authorized to support some elementary and junior high school titles. The video series "Good Conversation" presents original interviews with authors. The video series "All About the Book" is billed as a "kid's video guide" to the text. Both series are produced by Tim Podell Productions and can be ordered directly from ACCESS: The Education Station at:

ACCESS: The Education Station
Learning and Skills Television of Alberta Ltd.
3720 – 76 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB
T6B 2N9
780–440–7728
https://estore.accesslearning.com/

Review and Selection Process

In 2003, Alberta Education contracted specialists in children's and young adult's literature to develop lists of potential novels and full-length nonfiction titles for each grade division under review. Titles that were out-of-print or unavailable in Canada were not considered for inclusion on the new list.

Selected school jurisdictions were then invited to form teams of teachers to evaluate these potential titles for inclusion on the recommended list. The school boards who participated were:

Grades 4–6: Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7
Grades 7–9: Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7
and Parkland School Division No. 70
Grades 10–12: Calgary School District No. 19 and Rocky View School Division No. 41

All short-listed titles were read, reviewed and validated by a minimum of three readers. As the teacher review teams read the texts, they looked for and selected titles that:

- offered a variety of human experiences
- provided an interesting and challenging reading experience suitable for the age, ability and social maturity of the students
- elicited thoughtful responses and a critical appreciation of literature
- illustrated literary merit, with a range of style and structure
- broadened student understanding of social, historical, geographical and cultural diversity
- encouraged students to develop a sensitivity to and an understanding of individual differences, such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability
- used language effectively and responsibly, and used language that was essential to the integrity of the work.

In addition, the potential titles were analyzed to ensure that guidelines for recognizing diversity and promoting respect had been met. Several books were submitted for Aboriginal or other content validation.

🍁 Please note that Canadian titles are identified with this icon.

Selecting Titles for the Classroom

The teacher must exercise care in selecting learning resources appropriate for their students.

Alberta Education and the teacher review teams strongly recommend that teachers read the books prior to selection and carefully consider the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community.

The teacher review teams carefully considered grade appropriateness when assigning texts to this list. Teachers who consider a text from a different grade or course to be appropriate for their students may wish to coordinate their choice with their colleagues.

Titles must be selected in a context of respect for the values of others. If a student, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable reading an assigned book, an alternative choice should be offered.

Teachers of all grades are encouraged to refer to the Choosing Resources section in the *Senior High School English Language Arts Guide to Implementation,* 2003.[1]

---

[1] The *Senior High School Guide to Implementation* is available on the Alberta Education Web site at http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/english/ela10.asp. It is also available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre at http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca.

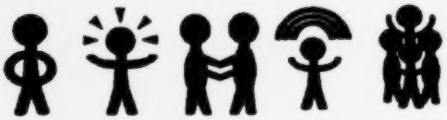
The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*[2] describes Controversial Issues as follows:

> Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree. Opportunities to deal with these issues are an integral part of student learning in Alberta.
>
> Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view, and to make sound judgements.
>
> Teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues shall exercise sensitivity to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed, or intimidated for positions that they hold on controversial issues.
>
> Controversial issues:
>
> - represent alternative points of view, subject to the condition that information presented is not restricted by any federal or provincial law
> - reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students
> - meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses and programs of study and education programs
> - reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts.
>
> Controversial issues that have been anticipated by the teacher, and those that may arise incidentally during instruction, should be used by the teacher to promote critical inquiry and teach thinking skills.
>
> The school plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development, and shall handle parental decisions in regard to controversial issues with respect and sensitivity.

This information about controversial issues should be used as a guide in presenting various points of view about an issue raised in a novel or piece of nonfiction. Teachers should also investigate what policies their school system has in place that will assist in responding to inquiries from parents or members of the community.

---

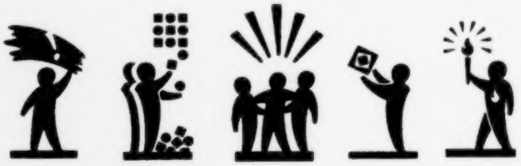
[2] The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12* is available on the Alberta Education Web site at http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/legislation. It is also available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre at http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca.



Grade 4

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List



AFTERNOON OF THE ELVES

Janet Taylor Lisle

> *"The elves might keep themselves hidden. They might even be invisible to the human eye, as Sara-Kate believed. But everywhere, everywhere! there was evidence of their small, exotic lives."*
> *p. 35*

Afternoon of the Elves is the story of an unpredictable friendship between two intentionally juxtaposed characters: nine-year-old Hillary and eleven-year-old Sara-Kate. Initially Hillary is put off by Sara-Kate's unkempt appearance and crusty language, but after Sara-Kate reveals that elves are building a village in her backyard, a compelling friendship begins to develop.

After it appears that Sara-Kate and her mother suddenly leave town, Hillary discovers that her friend has gone into hiding, emerging from the house only at night. When Hillary sees how Sara-Kate lives, she realizes that the fantasy of the elves is a refuge from reality for her friend.

While it exposes the problems of poverty, disability and neglect that can sometimes exist virtually unnoticed next door, Lisle's novel encourages us to celebrate individuality and imagination, and to look beyond surfaces. Teachers will find many opportunities to discuss the causes of socially unacceptable behaviour such as lying and stealing and more appropriate strategies for dealing with the challenges of life.

New York, NY:
Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers
Paper Star Paperback 1999
©1989

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–69811–806–5

Awards:

Newbery Honor Book, 1990

BUFFALO SUNRISE

Diane Swanson

Buffalo Sunrise is a comprehensive nonfiction resource about the North American buffalo, focusing on the significance of the buffalo in the history of First Nations peoples and Western settlement. In particular, Swanson, who grew up in the Lethbridge area, examines the importance of buffalo to Blackfoot families living on the Alberta–Montana plains around 1870. The book also outlines the rapid decline in the buffalo population due to over-hunting by European settlers, and initiatives that helped to revive the herds in the 20th century. Contemporary colour photographs, archival photographs and illustrations provide a rich visual accompaniment to Swanson's text. Fact boxes and sidebars provide detailed, interesting information to enrich the reader's knowledge.

When approaching this text, teachers should be aware of the Aboriginal content in the resource and be prepared to discuss related issues that may come up during class work.

"More than 400 years ago, Spanish explorers in North America spotted a shaggy, brown beast they had never seen before. They said it had horns like a cow, a mane like a lion, and a hump like a camel. And when it ran, it held its tail like a scorpion—straight up." p. 3

Vancouver, BC:
Whitecap Books 1996

paperback

ISBN 1–55110–378–8

DEAR MR. HENSHAW

Beverly Cleary

> *"Dear Mr. Henshaw, Mom is nagging me about your dumb old questions. She says if I really want to be an author, I should follow the tips in your letter. I should read, look, listen, think and write. She says the best way she knows for me to get started is to apply the seat of my pants to a chair and answer your questions and answer them fully. So here goes." p. 14*

Beverly Cleary's amusing and touching Newbery award-winning novel unfolds as a series of letters from a sixth grader, Leigh Botts, to his favourite author, Mr. Henshaw. Leigh initially writes to Mr. Henshaw to get information for a school report, but Mr. Henshaw replies that his favourite animal is a purple monster that eats children who send authors long lists of questions for reports instead of learning to use the library. To top everything, the author has sent Leigh his own list of questions, which Leigh's mother insists he must answer. In responding to the questions, Leigh reveals that his parents are divorced and that he is living with his mom in a tiny house on the California coast. He misses his dad, a trucker, and his dog Bandit, who rides along in Dad's cab.

Midway through the novel, Leigh quits mailing his letters and begins addressing them to "Dear Mr. Pretend Henshaw," and eventually he just dates and writes them as diary entries. This daily writing routine serves as a psychological release for Leigh as he deals with his parents' divorce and his problems at school, and effectively models for students the process of putting into the written word our thoughts and feelings about the important things that happen to us.

New York, NY:
Harper Trophy 1983

paperback

ISBN 0–38070–958–9

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1984

THE DOLL

Cora Taylor
🍁

The Doll draws on the family history of Edmonton novelist Cora Taylor. In this time-slip novel, an antique doll transports the young protagonist, Meg, back to the 1880s. While recovering from rheumatic fever, Meg stays with her grandmother and is allowed to sleep with Jessie, an antique china doll. Although she feels uncomfortable with the doll, Meg eventually falls asleep with her head against Jessie's and wakens to find herself with a different identity in a strange time and place. She has become Morag, a girl travelling with her family by ox and wagon along the Carlton Trail to a new home in western Canada.

> *"Meg opened her eyes. 'Poor Invalid Doll,' she said, but it was hard to feel sorry for Jessie face-to-face with those determined china features. The eyes still bothered her. Almost as if they held something...as if they were haunted." p. 8*

For the rest of the book, Meg slips between the world of the present—with worries about her parents separating—and the past— filled with the rigours of pioneer life on a wagon train. She comes to love the people of her long ago family and winds up saving "Little Lizzie" when she falls from a wagon during the family's escape from a prairie fire.

Suspecting that the pioneer family has links to her own family, Meg's investigation uncovers the story of "Angel Morag," her great-great-grandmother's sister who protected her during a prairie fire as a young girl, but never quite recovered herself. This discovery may suggest the notion of reincarnation as an explanation for the time slip in the story. Sensitive discussion about different religious beliefs about reincarnation will enrich understanding of the larger themes of facing life challenges, making difficult choices and adapting successfully to changing conditions.

Vancouver, BC:
Douglas & McIntyre 1987
[original 1985]

paperback reissue

ISBN 1-55054-218-4

Awards:

Canadian Children's Book Centre Choice, 1988

Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award, 1988

HANA'S SUITCASE

Karen Levine

> *"They had each other and they passed the time reading, talking, napping and thinking of home. It was in this warehouse on May 16, 1942, with a few candies and a stub of a candle, that Hana Brady celebrated her eleventh birthday."*
> *p. 52.*

Hana's Suitcase tells two nonfiction stories simultaneously. One story is a biographical retelling of the life of a Czechoslovakian girl, Hana Brady, who died at Auschwitz. The second story reveals how Hana's life impacted Japanese children through the Tokyo Holocaust Centre in Japan.

When Fumiko Ishioka took on her job as coordinator of the Tokyo Holocaust Centre in 1998, she made it her mission to share with Japanese children the terrible story of what happened to millions of Jewish children in World War II. Fumiko visited the Auschwitz Museum in Poland and was able to obtain a few objects to bring back to Tokyo, including a suitcase that belonged to Hana. It was this ordinary, slightly tattered, empty brown suitcase that most intrigued visitors to the museum.

Levine's alternating chapters of biography and history provide the reader with vivid details that encourage them to imagine and empathize with the millions of Jewish people persecuted by the Nazis. Teachers may be interested in expanding their classroom study of this novel with the CBC documentary available as a CD–ROM with this book: ISBN 1–896764–61–4.

Toronto, ON:
Second Story Press 2002

paperback

ISBN 1–896764–55–X

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 2003

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

C. S. Lewis

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe is the first novel in C.S. Lewis' classic fantasy series. The novel has a mix of human, animal and mythical characters engaged in high adventure in an imaginary world.

During the bombing of London in World War II, four children—Peter, Edmund, Lucy and Susan—are sent to live in the English countryside with an eccentric professor. When Lucy hides in an old wardrobe, she discovers it leads to Narnia, a land where it is always winter and never Christmas. On her first trip into Narnia, she encounters Mr. Tumnus who tells her of the ruling White Witch and her determination to capture the "daughters of Eve" and the "sons of Adam."

> *"'But you are—forgive me—you are what they call a girl?' asked the Faun. 'Of course I'm a girl,' said Lucy. 'You are in fact Human?' 'Of course I'm human,' said Lucy, still a little puzzled. 'To be sure, to be sure,' said the Faun. 'How stupid of me!'" p. 11*

All of the children eventually travel together through the wardrobe and find sanctuary from the Witch in the woodland house of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. Edmund soon betrays the group by slipping away to join the White Witch, while the Beavers and the other three children flee to the other side of Narnia. Complications ensue culminating in the appearance of Father Christmas and a magical lion named Aslan and finally, the great battle with the Witch, her wolves and her evil minions.

Teachers should be aware that C. S. Lewis was a well-known professor of theology at Oxford and that the series is sometimes criticized for being too overtly an allegorical representation of Christian theology. Sensitivity to biblical references and mature discussion of them will help students make thoughtful and appropriate interpretations of the text.

New York, NY:
HarperCollins 2000

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–06[illegible]40–942–2

MRS. FRISBY AND THE RATS OF NIMH

Robert C. O'Brien

"We all got used to that, for from then on we got injections at least twice a week. What they were injecting and why, I did not know. Yet for twenty of us those injections were to change our whole lives." p. 111.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH is a fantasy novel about Mrs. Frisby, the widowed head of a family of field mice, and her adventures with a group of super intelligent rats. When her son, Timothy, is too ill to be moved from the field to their summer home, Mrs. Frisby seeks the help of her deceased husband's friends. One of them, a wise owl, urges her to take her plight to a colony of highly intelligent rats holed up beneath a rosebush in the farmer's yard.

There, Mrs. Frisby meets Nicodemus, one of the rat leaders, who tells her the story of how their colony of rats, along with her husband, had escaped from research scientists at the National Institute for Mental Health. Thanks to the intelligence serum given to them, their colony was left with superior intellectual capacity and an extended life span compared to other rats. Now, the rats are at odds about their future. As this conflict escalates, with tragic results, Mrs. Frisby must use all of her courage and resourcefulness to save her children.

This novel explores mature themes such as animal testing, genetic engineering, civilization, survival, change, freedom, and the relationships between living things. Sensitive discussion will help students work through these themes.

New York, NY:
Simon & Schuster 1996
[original 1971]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-68971-068-2

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1972

Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, 1972

ALA Notable Book, 1972

Horn Book Fanfare Book, 1972

NUMBER THE STARS

Lois Lowry

Number the Stars is a fictional account of a Danish family's experience helping a Jewish family escape Nazi-occupied Copenhagen in the 1940's. The novel centres around ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen, who suddenly acquires her Jewish neighbour, Ellen Rosen, as a "sister." Ellen's parents have gone into hiding as the German troops sweep the city and Annemarie's family, like many Danish citizens, are putting their own lives on the line to help the Rosens escape. The escape begins with a dangerous journey to relocate Mrs. Johansen, her children and Ellen to their uncle's farm located on the coast. Soldiers are combing the coast, too, though, and Annemarie finds herself face-to-face with them as she carries a crucial packet to her uncle's fishing boat that is poised to slip across the channel to Sweden where the Rosens are in hiding.

"'I'm sorry I have dark hair,' Ellen murmured. 'It made them suspicious.' Mama reached over quickly and took Ellen's hand. 'You have beautiful hair, Ellen, just like your mama's,' she said. 'Don't ever be sorry for that.'" p. 50

Lowry's Newbery award-winning novel celebrates the heroism of the Danish people who managed to smuggle almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark across the sea to Sweden. Lowry depicts the terror of war sensitively and powerfully, without gruesome details. Familiarity with World War II, the Resistance Movements in Denmark and other countries, and the geographical locations of Denmark, Germany and Sweden will enhance student understanding of this text.

Lowry's autobiography, *Looking Back: A Book of Memoires*, is included in the Grade 8 list.

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Lois Lowry*, 2002 [22 min. BPN 2075911].

New York, NY:
Houghton Mifflin 1989

paperback

ISBN 0-44022-753-4

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1990

OWLS IN THE FAMILY

Farley Mowat

> *"The sight of the baby prairie chickens popping their heads out through Wol's feathers, and that great big beak of his snapping anxiously in the air right over their heads, was the silliest thing I've ever seen. I guess Wol knew it was silly, too, but he couldn't figure out how to get out of the mess he was in. He kept looking at me as if he were saying, 'For Heaven's sake, DO something.'"* p. 78

Owls in the Family is a humorous story about growing up in Saskatoon in a household that indulges a boy's love of pets by allowing him to keep two owls. The story is set in the 1930's to 40's, and the young protagonist, Billy, is loosely based upon Farley Mowat as a child.

After a violent storm, Billy and his friend Bruce save the one remaining fledgling in a nest and name it Wol. They manage to save a second owlet, Weeps, from an abusive situation. The book tells of the misadventures that ensue, as Wol terrifies the cook, a visiting minister and some town bullies, while Weeps never learns to fly and looks to Mutt, the family hound, for protection.

Teachers will need to provide a historical context for students before reading this novel in order to support discussion about sensitive parts of the text. There are instances of stereotyping of First Nations people, reflecting the social attitudes of the time period, but there are also positive references to the two cultures co-existing peaceably within one community. There are also examples of animals being mistreated by some characters. Teacher-supported discussion about these instances will address any confusion or concerns that students may have, and help them form mature decisions about the appropriateness of these references.

Toronto, ON:
McClelland & Stewart Ltd.
1971
[original 1961]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–7710–6693–7

POLAR: THE TITANIC BEAR

Daisy Corning Stone Spedden and Laurie McGraw

Polar is an eyewitness account of the *Titanic* shipwreck written in 1913 by Daisy Corning Stone Spedden for her 8-year-old son, Douglas, and told through the eyes of the boy's teddy bear, Polar. Watercolour illustrations, actual family photographs, keepsakes, and historic postcards support the printed text in providing a rich picture of the events.

> *"Soon everyone had been rescued—except for me. I lay alone in the empty lifeboat. Several minutes went by, but nothing happened. Everyone seemed to have forgotten me. My heart began to pound … Would I ever see Master again?" p. 45*

Corning weaves fact and fiction together by telling a story that begins in the toy workshop where Polar was born and tells how he was given to Douglas. When the Spedden family decides to tour the world, Douglas brings Polar with him. At the end of this trip, the family boards the *Titanic* to sail home to America. On the fateful night of the sinking, the Spedden's are fortunate to be rescued in a lifeboat. In the commotion, Polar is left aboard the sinking *Titanic*, but by the end of the book, Polar is reunited with his owner.

This heart-felt retelling of a tragic story, written by a mother for her son, resonates with bravery, love and loss surrounding this historically significant event.

Toronto, ON:
Madison Press Books 1994

paperback

ISBN 0–316–80909–8

SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES

Eleanor Coerr

> *"She looked at her flock hanging from the ceiling. As she watched, a light autumn breeze made the birds rustle and sway. They seemed to be alive and flying out through the open window. How beautiful and free they were!" p. 63*

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes is a biographical novel based on the life of a young Japanese girl, Sadako, who faces and eventually dies from cancer caused by radiation from the bombing of Hiroshima. Sadako is a star of her school's running team until one day she starts having dizzy spells. Soon Sadako learns that she has leukemia, the "atom bomb disease." Reminded of a Japanese legend that says if a sick person folds one thousand paper cranes, the gods will restore her health, Sadako keeps up her courage and her strength by folding hundreds of cranes.

The story beautifully and sensitively retells Sadako's battle with leukemia, and reinforces the message of peace as the preferred way of solving world problems. Teachers will need to sensitively address the issues of illness, death and family grief with students.

New York, NY:
Puffin Books 1999
[original 1977]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-69811-8022

SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL

Patricia MacLachlan

Sarah, Plain and Tall recounts the difficulties experienced by two children and a single father on the mid-west American prairies after the premature death of their mother. Anna, the eldest child, narrates the story and acts as a maternal role model for her younger brother. However, recognizing the need for a wife and mother, the father advertises for such a person in the newspaper.

Sara Elisabeth Wheaton replies to the ad and relocates from the eastern coast of Maine for a trial period. MacLachlan creates a realistic tension in this new family arrangement, with the strong-minded, independent Sarah often at odds with the traditional values and ideas expressed by the father. However, the family embraces Sarah and ultimately she decides to stay.

The issue of the premature death of the mother will be difficult for some young readers and will need to be addressed sensitively by teachers.

> *"My father did not see her look, but I did. And I knew that Caleb had seen it, too. Sarah was not smiling. Sarah was already lonely. In a month's time the preacher might come to marry Sarah and Papa. And a month was a long time. Time enough for her to change her mind and leave us."* p. 20

New York, NY:
HarperCollins 1985

paperback

ISBN 0–06440–205–3

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1986

THE SECRET GARDEN

Frances Hodgson Burnett

> *"... she held back the swinging curtain of ivy and pushed back the door which opened slowly—slowly. Then she slipped through it, and shut it behind her, and stood with her back against it, looking about her and breathing quite fast with excitement, and wonder, and delight. She was standing inside the secret garden." p. 79*

The Secret Garden is a timeless novel centred around, Mary Lennox, an unsociable and spoiled little girl who slowly changes her attitude after discovering a secret garden on her uncle's property. When Mary's parents die in a cholera epidemic in India, she is sent to Yorkshire to live with her aloof uncle and his protective housekeeper. Soon, Mary finds her way into the forbidden garden, which has been locked since the death of her aunt ten years ago. The garden quickly becomes Mary's getaway, a secret she shares with Dickon, an older boy who knows all about nature, and eventually with Colin, her fretful, bedridden cousin. Mary, Dickon and Colin work together to restore the neglected garden and soon become close friends. As the garden comes to life and blooms, so do the children. This novel prompts discussion about dreaming, believing and creating hope in the face of physical and emotional challenges.

Before studying the novel, it is important to be aware that the book uses stereotypical terms such as "blacks," which are intended to reflect the social, political era in England at the time. Mature discussion and background information about this historical context will help students understand the inappropriateness of this language in today's society. A general discussion of the historical context of India as a British colony will enhance understanding. Finally, the book also contains references to magic, which may be interpreted as synonymous with the forces of God; these references will need to be dealt with through sensitive discussion.

New York, NY:
Harper Trophy 1962

paperback

ISBN 0-06440-188-X

THE SHEEP-PIG

Dick King-Smith

The Sheep-Pig is a humorous animal tale about Babe, a "Never win nothing" pig, according to Farmer Hoggett who won him at a county fair by correctly guessing his weight. When Babe is taken in by Fly, the farm's British sheepdog, he learns how to be an effective, indispensable sheep herder by talking respectfully to the sheep. After Babe protects the sheep from thieves, the farmer's original plans to make dinner out of Babe change to further honing his skills as a "sheep-pig."

This charming, easy read will entertain children and lead to discussions about relationships, love, loyalty and heroism. Teachers may wish to lead a comparative analysis of the novel with the popular movie version since many children will already be familiar with it.

> *"'If I might ask a great favour of you,' he said hurriedly, 'could you all please be kind enough to walk down to that gate where the farmer is standing, and go through it? Take your time, please, there's absolutely no rush.'"*
> *p. 51*

Toronto, ON:
Random House 1983

Paperback

ISBN 0–67987–393–7

Awards:

Guardian Children's Fiction Award, 1984

TICKET TO CURLEW

Celia Barker Lottridge

> *"All winter he had worried that his horse would die on the winter prairie. Now Josie had come out with a new worry that he had pushed to the back of his mind. The horse he had seen leading a whole herd was King, not Prince. Maybe he had gone wild."*
> *p. 131*

Ticket to Curlew tells the story of eleven-year-old Sam Ferrier, who moves from Iowa with his family to build a farm in southern Alberta. When Sam's father returns from a trip to Curlew with a white Mustang horse named Prince, the horse becomes a source of transportation, safety and love for Sam. As winter approaches, Sam is devastated to learn he must release Prince into the wild for the winter, a custom of prairie life. He worries that Prince will not survive or that he will become wild and not return. When Prince finally returns in the spring, stronger than ever, Sam is overjoyed and aptly renames him King.

Lottridge sketches the Ferrier family and their small prairie community with loving detail, showing us both the daily routines of homesteaders and what special occasions such as Christmas were like. The book reveals some of the negative aspects of building a new life on the Canadian prairies, but balances these with the positives, including the ideas of community and helpfulness.

Toronto, ON:
Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre 1992

paperback

ISBN 0–88899–221–1

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 1993

THE VAN GOGH CAFE

Cynthia Rylant

The Van Gogh Cafe tells of a series of magical, mysterious occurrences that take place in the Van Gogh Cafe in Flowers, Kansas. Ten-year-old Clara has been helping Marc, her dad, run the cafe, serving coffee to the early morning customers before heading off to school. It is Clara who first notices the possum hanging upside down from a tree branch outside the cafe window. The possum becomes the centre of attention for cafe diners and is connected to magical happenings including Marc's ability to write poems that appear to foretell the future. Other serendipitous happenings involving sea gulls, an aged film star, healing muffins, lost pets and travellers reaffirms that "magic enough lasts forever in its walls" at the Van Gogh Cafe.

Teachers should recognize that magic may be a controversial subject depending on the religious orientation of readers. The text also contains a subtle reference to a possible homosexual relationship.

> *"... pretty soon word spreads that there is a cafe—the Van Gogh Cafe—that is wonderful, like a dream, like a mystery, like a painting, and you ought to go there, they will say, for you will never forget it. You will want to stay, if you can. Some have for a while. Like the possum ..."*
> *pp. 2–3*

Toronto, ON:
Harcourt Brace 1995

paperback

ISBN 0–590–90717–4

THE WHIPPING BOY

Sid Fleischman

"... Jemmy felt a bleak discomfort. He would miss the shelves of books he'd left behind in the castle. In the sewers, he hadn't been aware of his own ignorance. He saw no choice now but to return. But he realized that he'd lost his taste for ignorance." p. 66

The Whipping Boy is the story of two young boys: the spoiled Prince Horace and his "whipping boy," Jemmy who must receive the prince's punishments. Although Jemmy annoys Prince "Brat" because he refuses to cry when taking a thrashing, the two are destined to become fast friends when the prince decides to run away from home. Before Jemmy can carry out his plan to slip away, they are captured by two fierce-looking highwaymen, Cutwater and Hold-Your-Nose Billy. When the robbers demand that the prince write a ransom note to his father, only to find him unable to write, they suspect that Jemmy is the true prince, a role Jemmy quickly assumes. This role reversal teaches both characters, especially Prince Brat, about dignity and respect, equality and diversity, loyalty and friendship.

The references to spanking and physical abuse are articulated as a factual reflection of the era within which the novel is set. Discussion about royalty, hierarchy and punishment during the medieval era in England will support the reader's understanding of the deeper themes that underpin the text.

New York, NY:
Morrow 1989
[original 1986]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–81671–038–4

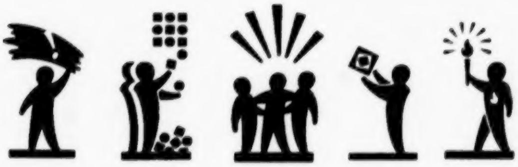
Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1987

Grade 5

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List



THE BORROWERS

Mary Norton

> *"'Don't move!' said a voice, and the voice, like the eye was enormous but, somehow, hushed—and hoarse like a surge of wind through the grating on a stormy night in March. Arrietty froze. 'So this is it,' she thought, 'the worst and most terrible thing of all: I have been seen'!" p. 71*

The Borrowers is a fantastical story about tiny blue-collar people living beneath the floorboards of a mansion in Edwardian Britain. Pod, his wife Homily and their daughter Arrietty thrive on Pod's ability to 'borrow' what they need, including furniture, clothing and food, from the upstairs occupants—an elderly, bedridden lady and her servants.

Arrietty, who has never been allowed above the floorboards, begs to go with Pod on one of his borrowing expeditions. When he finally relents, she cannot resist sneaking out into the yard, despite her father's repeated warnings about the importance of not being seen. There, she is startled by a gigantic boy whom she quickly befriends. When the borrowers are discovered and suddenly endangered, the boy remains loyal to his unusual friend and protects the family.

The Borrowers is a clever satire on class distinctions in Edwardian Britain, but readers unfamiliar with this element will still appreciate the themes that the book highlights: friendship, loyalty, cultural diversity, trust and survival. This popular novel spawned a series of *Borrowers* adventures.

New York, NY:
Harcourt Inc. 1989
[original 1953]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-15209-990-5

BOY: TALES OF CHILDHOOD

Roald Dahl

In ***Boy,*** Roald Dahl takes a different approach to autobiography, sharing several humorous memories from his childhood rather than trying to recount the events of his entire life. He includes generous details about his family, including his Norwegian father and mother, as well as personally significant landmarks in his childhood. These anecdotes provide many opportunities for the reader to empathize and emotionally connect with his depiction of the innocence and mischievousness of childhood. For example, he tells in wry detail the story of how he got revenge on Mrs. Pratchett, the nasty candy store owner, by putting a dead mouse in one of her candy jars.

Teachers should be aware that Dahl tends to get carried away with overly negative descriptions of teachers from his past, even referring to one of them as a "torturer." Discussion about punishment in English schools during Dahl's era in the early to mid 1900s may be helpful to address students' concerns and questions.

"'Toothbrush bristles?' I cried. 'How can toothbrush bristles make your appendix go bad?' Nanny, who in my eyes was filled with more wisdom than Solomon, replied, 'Whenever a bristle comes out of your toothbrush and you swallow it, it sticks in your appendix and turns it rotten. In the war,' she went on, 'the German spies used to sneak box loads of loose-bristled toothbrushes into our shops and millions of our soldiers got appendicitis.'" p. 95

New York, NY:
Penguin Group Puffin Books
1999
[original 1984]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–06–440184–7

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

Katherine Paterson

> *"There in their secret place, his feelings bubbled inside him like a stew on the back of the stove—some sad for her in her lonesomeness, but chunks of happiness, too. To be able to be Leslie's one whole friend in the world as she was his—he couldn't help being satisfied about that." p. 76*

Bridge to Terabithia is a realistic depiction of the touching friendship between two Grade 5 classmates, Leslie and Jess, in the fictional town of Lark Creek, in rural Virginia. When Leslie moves with her family into the old Perkins place next to Jess's family farm, she surprises Jess not only with her "hippie" ways but also by outperforming him in a race. Even though they are competitors, Leslie and Jess share similar, quirky and secretive personalities and become fast friends. Soon they find their own meeting place, Terabithia, a secret location similar to Narnia in C. S. Lewis' classic fantasy series.

Leslie's unexpected, tragic death midway through the book forces Jess to grieve and to mature quickly. The loss is delicately described and eloquently handled by Paterson, but readers will need to be warned before beginning the novel that the story requires them to look at death and grieving.

New York, NY:
Harper Trophy, 1977

paperback

ISBN 0-06440-1847

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1978

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *All About the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Bridge to Terabithia,"* 2002 [22 min. BPN 2076102] and *Good Conversation: A Talk with Katherine Paterson*, 1999 [21 min. BPN 2075908].

FINDERS KEEPERS

Andrea Spalding

🍁

Finders Keepers uses the relationship between two friends to explore discriminatory attitudes toward First Nations peoples and toward children with learning disabilities. The story centres around the discovery of an 8000-year-old stone point by Danny Budzynski, the main character, while he is wandering nearby fields. Danny's friend, Joshua Brokenhorn, who lives on the Peigan Reserve at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, confirms it is a lance head. Danny becomes determined to learn more about First Nations culture and artifacts in order to better understand this curious finding.

> *"'You know about this stuff?' asked Danny eagerly as he rewrapped the point and thrust it in his pocket. 'Great, maybe we can make bows, or lances, or whatever, and play at being Indians.' 'I don't have to play at being 'Indian',' said Joshua stiffly. 'I'm Peigan.'" p. 31*

But even though he dedicates himself to learning, he has difficulty sharing his ideas in writing. His teacher is easily frustrated by Danny's difficulties and responds impatiently, often treating Danny poorly and embarrassing him in front of his classmates. Giving in to the negativity, Danny chooses to abandon a traditional classroom for buffalo hunts, pow wows and archeological digs in the Alberta hills with Joshua.

Readers will share Danny's rollercoaster of feelings as he experiences heart-breaking moments in school and makes exciting discoveries about the lance head and about himself. Teachers will need to discuss the themes of learning disabilities, discrimination, integration and segregation as they arise within the text.

Victoria, BC:
Beach Home Publishing 1995

paperback

ISBN 0-88878-359-0

FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER

E. L. Konigsburg

"Jamie couldn't control his smile. He said, 'You know, Claude, for a sister and a fussbudget, you're not too bad.' Claudia replied, 'You know, Jamie, for a brother and a cheapskate, you're not too bad.'" p. 38

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler begins when Claudia Kincaid decides to run away from home to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Claudia invites her younger brother Jamie to join her, since he has saved nearly twenty-five dollars from his allowances and she has sparse savings. After sneaking into the museum with a group of school children and hiding in the washroom at closing time, Claudia and Jamie have the vast building to themselves every night. The children spend a week in the museum until they become intrigued by a statue of an angel, donated by the wealthy Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, which may or may not be a Michelangelo original. To find out the truth, the children travel to Connecticut where Mrs. Frankweiler lives and convince her to let them search her extensive files for information.

Konigsburg's novel may be controversial for romanticizing running away as an exciting adventure with unexpected rewards. It is important to discuss the fictional, imaginative licence taken by the author and to examine the likelihood of events evolving this way in reality.

New York, NY:
Dell Yearling, 1967

paperback

ISBN 0–440–43180–8

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1968

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with E. L. Konigsburg,* 1995 [22 min. BPN 2075903].

THE GOLDEN AQUARIANS

Monica Hughes

The Golden Aquarians is a science fiction novel set on the planet Aqua in 2092. The story centres around Walt, whose father is the chief engineer of a terraforming agency. For eleven years, ever since his mother died, Walt has been living with his aunt and has had little relationship with his father. When his dad finally summons Walt to live with him on Aqua, Walt anxiously tries to please his father but finds him to be distant and preoccupied with his work. On top of that, Walt's classmates on Aqua bully him.

To escape these problems, Walt spends his time exploring the marshy channels of the planet. With each trip, he stumbles across more evidence that Aqua harbours intelligent life, a fact that would make his father's engineering project illegal. Eventually, froglike creatures reveal themselves to Walt and Solveig, the daughter of a biologist who has befriended him. The two try to put a halt to the destruction of the creatures' marshy home and in doing so, incur the anger of Walt's father. While exploring the hostility that can exist between father and son, Hughes uses name-calling and some questionable language.

The Golden Aquarians is an accessible parable about humankind's capability to destroy worlds in the name of "progress." The story stresses the importance of respecting ecosystems and the right of survival for all species.

> *"'I saw one of them. In the reeds. An alien, about the size of the one that made that print, I guess.' 'And you never told me. Anyway, they're not the aliens. We are.'" pp. 104–105*

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins 1994

paperback

ISBN 0–00–647963–4

THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

Sheila Burnford

> *"The young dog saw the onrushing wave several moments before it reached them, and frantically tried to swim into a position upstream of the cat, instinctively trying to protect him; but he was too late, and the great curling, crested wave surged over, submerging them in a whirling chaos of debris."*
> *p. 64*

The Incredible Journey is a story about three pets who trek across the Ontario wilderness to return to their home. Tao (an aloof Siamese cat), Bodger (an old English bull terrier), and Luath (a large Labrador retriever) are temporarily residing with Longridge, a friend of their owners. When Longridge sets off for a three-week holiday, a miscommunication with the housekeeper results in the trio being unattended.

Seeing Longridge leave, the animals decide to head home, some 250 miles away across rugged Northwestern Ontario terrain. Tao is the most resourceful at finding food, and Bodger and Luath soon become ravenous with hunger. When Bodger collapses and a bear cub investigates, something is triggered in Tao. He drives away the bear and proceeds to bring food to the bulldog. Luath, too, learns to forage for frogs and rabbits. Ultimately the obstacle-filled journey teaches the trio the importance of relying upon each others' strengths. Loyalty, love, determination, adaptation and survival are central themes in this novel.

New York, NY:
Bantam Doubleday Publishing
Incorporated 1960

paperback

ISBN 0-44022-670-8

THE LAST SAFE HOUSE: A STORY OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Barbara Greenwood

The Last Safe House is an example of 'faction'—part fiction and part nonfiction. The fictional portion is set in 1896 and centres on Johanna Reid, a twelve-year-old girl who must live with an escaped slave named Eliza. While Eliza waits to be reunited with her mother and brother, who did not make it to the safety of the Reids' home, Johanna learns to overcome her own prejudices. Eventually the two girls become good friends.

The nonfiction portions are interspersed throughout the text and include brief descriptions of plantation life and the Underground Railroad: how it worked, who risked their lives to escape or help others flee, and who profited from catching a fugitive slave. A balance of Canadian and American historical facts paints a complete portrait of these events. The text also includes suggested activities, such as songs and storytelling; directions for making important survival items, such as lanterns; and commonly used recipes, such as gingerbread cookies.

The fiction and nonfiction text compliment each other and together help the reader to understand slavery and persecution in American and Canadian history, while also developing empathy for the people involved, especially children. Themes of loyalty, friendship, equality and cultural diversity, change and survival underpin this text.

> *"Johanna struggled for words to comfort Eliza ... Then she remembered the gingerbread girl. 'Look!' She held it out to Eliza. 'It's you—running free.' Eliza looked at the little figure for a long minute. 'No.' She shook her head. 'Not free. Just runnin'. Til they find my momma and Ben—just runnin'.'" p. 33*

Toronto, ON:
Kids Can Press Ltd. 1998

paperback picture book

ISBN 1-55074-509-3

THE MIDNIGHT FOX

Betsy Byars

"I had just gotten one window to jerk down about two inches when I heard the gunshot. I had never heard any worse sound in my life. It was a very final sound, like the most enormous period in the world. Bam. Period. The end."
p. 115

The Midnight Fox tells the story of a young boy's growing fascination with a black mother fox he sees on his aunt and uncle's farm. Tom originally dislikes the idea of staying with his aunt and uncle for the summer, but after spotting the fox, he becomes mesmerized. When the fox begins stealing Aunt Millie's poultry, there can be only one solution, and it is too terrible for Tom to contemplate. Tom finally convinces Uncle Fred not to kill his beloved fox.

The novel takes a compelling look at a boy's growing love for a wild, free animal. It is a beautifully-written book about the rights of all creatures and the need for compassionate solutions, which will likely raise discussions about hunting laws and animal rights. Other minor controversial points—references to corporal punishment child labour, and body image—can be dealt with through sensitive discussion and an understanding of the historical context.

New York, NY:
Penguin Group 1968

paperback

ISBN 0–14–031450–4

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Betsy Byars*, 1994 [20 min. BPN 2075902].

THE NOSE FROM JUPITER

Richard Scrimger

On the one hand, ***The Nose from Jupiter*** is a realistic story about Allan Dingwall, a young boy with typical worries: seeking approval and love from his divorced parents, dreading math because it is difficult for him and wishing that school bullies did not exist. On the other hand, it is a humorous story about an unreal event that brightens Allan's otherwise tough reality—a loud-mouthed but lovable alien named Norbert takes up residence in Allan's nose. Soon Norbert becomes known as "Squeaky," the school's suddenly gifted ventriloquist. This amusing gift reinvents Allan's social image into a popular classroom clown.

The novel takes a creative approach to exploring common themes of peer pressure, bullying, insecurity, and overcoming these childhood frustrations. As Allan seeks acceptance from his parents and friends, and finally learns to stand up for himself, readers can easily empathize with both the realistic and imaginative methods the book suggests for dealing with life struggles.

> *"'Bye, Mom,' said Victor, pulling me away. 'Bye,' I said. —Farewell, mavourneen! called Norbert. Victor turned to me. 'What?' 'It's my nose,' I said. 'He speaks lots of languages. He's very talented.'"* p. 36

Toronto, ON:
Tundra Books 1998

paperback

ISBN 0–88776–428–2

A PRAIRIE BOY'S WINTER

William Kurelek

> *"There was something different about the snow on balmy late winter days: it was no longer powdery. Then, not even hockey could hold the attention of William's schoolmates. Everyone wanted to make snowballs."*
> *p. 36*

A Prairie Boy's Winter is a nonfiction picture book that describes life on the Manitoba prairies during the final years of the Great Depression. Written from the perspective of the author as a child, the beautiful paintings and short printed text share experiences such as first snowfalls, terrifying blizzards, typical farm chores and childhood games.

Kurelek provides a joyous, rich depiction of life, and encourages the reader to fully appreciate and preserve the natural environment. Descriptions in the text continually reinforce the beauty of the prairies and the simplicity of meeting one's needs with community love and support.

Toronto, ON:
Tundra Books 1973

paperback picture book

ISBN 0-88776-102-X

SHILOH

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Shiloh is a realistic depiction of a boy's love and loyalty to a pet beagle. Marty finds the dog in the fields behind his house and brings him home even though he realizes that money is tight and his dad would never approve of a pet. When his father makes him return the dog to his actual owner, Judd Travers, Marty is horrified to see Judd verbally and physically abuse the beagle and his other hunting dogs.

When Marty is given the opportunity to keep Shiloh away from Judd, life begins to fill with moral dilemmas and complications—lying to his parents, figuring out ways to sneak food from the house to feed Shiloh, keeping Judd off the dog's trail. These ethical dilemmas present an opportunity for rich classroom discussion.

References to animal abuse and hunting in the text will require careful, thoughtful discussion with students, emphasizing the time period and geographical location of the text. Reynolds Naylor gives readers an opportunity to witness acceptance and tolerance between Judd and Marty, and a peaceful, collaborative resolution to community and family challenges.

"I wonder if maybe, in time, if I never see Shiloh again, I'll forget about him. But then I'm lying on the couch that night after everyone else has gone to bed, and I hear this far-off sound again, like a dog crying. Not barking, not howling, not whining even. Crying. And I get this awful ache in my chest. I wonder if it is a dog. If it's Shiloh." p. 30

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Phyllis Reynolds Naylor—first look*, 1995 [25 min. BPN 2075916] and *All about the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Shiloh,"* 2002 [21 min. BPN 2076105].

New York, NY:
Aladdin 2000

paperback

ISBN 0-68983-582-5

THE SKY IS FALLING

Kit Pearson

The Sky Is Falling is set in the period in Canadian history when nearly 8000 British children were evacuated to Canada to escape the difficulties of World War II. In this novel, brother and sister, Gavin and Norah, are sent to live with Mrs. Ogilvie in her upscale Toronto home. While Gavin adjusts easily, Norah is miserable and resents Mrs. Ogilvie's preference for Gavin. Norah's aloof attitude also makes her unpopular at school, but she soon finds one friend in Bernard Gunter, another outcast.

Eventually Norah's misery causes her to run away from Mrs. Ogilvie's home, taking Gavin with her. By the end of the novel, Norah grows to appreciate her brother and their relationship strengthens. She also makes peace with Mrs. Ogilvie and agrees to give the arrangement a second chance.

The text offers opportunities for rich discussion around the themes of survival and adaptation to uncontrollable circumstances.

> *"Escaping into books and having a friend made being a war guest more bearable. But now Norah lay awake worrying about her family. The radio reports from England were worse and worse—London was bombed every night now. She checked the hall table each day for mail, but still no letter came."* p. 148

Toronto, ON:
Viking 1989

paperback

ISBN 0-14-034189-7

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 1989

STORM CHILD

Brenda Bellingham

Storm Child tells the story of Isobel, a young girl of mixed ancestry living in Fort Edmonton in the early 1830s. Isobel, named "Storm Child" at birth, is the daughter of a Peigan mother and a Scottish father. When Isobel's mother receives word that her husband is not planning to return from Edinburgh, she and Isobel are devastated. While her mother moves in with a widower in town, Isobel is angry at her father's abandonment and, confused about where she fits in, decides to head south to live with her grandparents in a Peigan encampment. Isobel travels with Jamey Jock, another Peigan who is also relocating to the encampment. When Jamey betrays the Hudson Bay Company by trading illegally with Americans, Isobel has a difficult choice and this reflects the major theme driving the story: Isobel's conflicting loyalties and search for her own identity.

"Isobel bowed her head. 'I have no love for white men,' her grandfather had said. Had he forgotten that she was half white? It was what she had wanted—to be accepted as a real Peigan—and yet ..." p. 74

Bellingham accurately and thoroughly represents the time and place of the novel, including the social, economic and racial inequities that existed. These references will require sensitive discussion about the historical context. Despite these realities, the underlying themes of the novel are positive: peaceful resolutions to problems, tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity.

Toronto, ON:
Lorimer, 1985

paperback

ISBN 0-88862-793-9

TRAPPED IN ICE

Eric Walters

> *"Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the bear. It was charging towards me in big loping strides, quickly closing the gap between us. I screamed uncontrollably! It was getting bigger and bigger, coming closer and closer. I could see every ripple of its body, the muscles, the folds of the skin, the mouth partly open, the thick tongue hanging out of one side." p. 124*

Trapped in Ice is set in the winter of 1913–1914 on an expedition launched by Vilhjalmur Stefansson to map uncharted Arctic islands in Canada's north. When their ship, the Karluck, became locked in ice en route to Herschel Island, Stefansson took a small contingent to try and reach land. The ship's captain, Robert Bartlett, faced the challenge of saving the remaining members of the expedition and the ship's crew as the ice in which they were encased drifted toward Siberia.

In this exciting novel, Eric Walters presents this story of Arctic exploration from the perspective of thirteen-year-old Helen Kiruk, the daughter of the seamstress hired for the expedition. Partly through a diary format, we learn how Helen and her younger brother Michael find themselves drawing closer together in the face of an overwhelming task of dogsledding with the crew over precarious ice. Helen also discovers in the gruff captain, something of a kindred spirit who loves hearing her stories and who invites her listen to his favourite Mozart recordings.

The novel also explores the themes of diversity and respect through the relationship between one of the scientists and the Inuit guide, Kataktovich. While the scientist initially refers to Kataktovich as a "dirty, filthy Indian," he later comes to learn Kataktovich's language and customs while spending a large amount of time with him.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.
1997

paperback

ISBN 0-14-038626-2

Awards:

Shortlisted for the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award

UNDERGROUND TO CANADA

Barbara Smucker

> *"There was moaning now and crying up and down the line of slaves. The big slave trader didn't care or hear. He lashed his whip in the air, pulling children from their mothers and fathers and sending them to the cart."*
> *p. 20*

Underground to Canada is a historical novel set in the period just before the Civil War, when the Underground Railroad was helping slaves escape to Canada. The novel centres on a female protagonist, Julilly, who is separated from her mother and relocated to a different plantation. Eventually, Alexander Ross, an abolitionist posing as an orthologist, devises an escape plan for Julilly and some other slaves on the plantation. As Julilly makes the difficult trek across the northern states, she finds the mental and physical strength from the belief that her mother has also found a way to escape to Canada.

In his introduction to the 1999 reissue of this novel, Lawrence Hill argues that it is essential for teachers and parents to talk to students about the term "nigger" and how it represents the dehumanizing attitude many white people had toward black people in the days of slavery. Rich discussion about this terminology will enrich students' appreciation and understanding of this period in history, and reveal the underlying themes of tolerance, respect, sacrifice and freedom that pervade the text.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books, a division of
Pearson Canada 1978

paperback

ISBN 0-14-130686-6

A WRINKLE IN TIME

Madeline L'Engle

"Calvin's voice was still angry and his freckles seemed to stand out on his face. 'Even traveling at the speed of light it would take us years and years to get here.' 'Oh, we don't travel at the speed of anything,' Mrs Whatsit explained earnestly. 'We tesser. Or you might say, we wrinkle.'" p. 62

A Wrinkle in Time is a science fiction fantasy novel in which three children travel to a parallel universe and are forced to overcome dark forces. The story centres on a female protagonist, Meg, whose scientist father has disappeared. When Meg meets three unearthly strangers, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which, she is determined to travel with them to find her father. Together with her genius younger brother, George Wallace, and her school friend, Calvin O'Keefe, Meg journeys through space and time on a daring rescue mission.

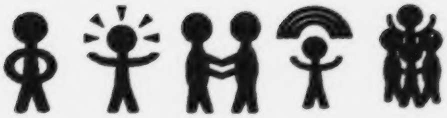
When they finally get to the planet of Camazotz, George Wallace must face his own struggle in order to defeat "IT," a dark power that is sweeping the universe and has the inhabitants of the planet brainwashed. The children rely on their own strength and the strengths of each other as they face danger and darkness to overcome evil. The themes of courage, love and hope are subtly developed throughout the novel. Teachers should be aware that L'Engle makes many biblical references in the novel that may require discussion and explanation for students.

New York, NY:
Bantam Doubleday Dell Books
for Young Readers 1973
[original 1962]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-44049-805-8

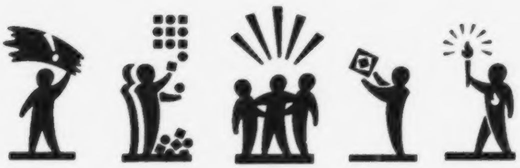
This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Madeleine L'Engle*, 1994 [22 min. BPN 2075913].



Grade 6

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List



ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

L. M. Montgomery

> *"She danced up to the little looking-glass and peered into it. Her pointed freckled face and solemn gray eyes peered back at her. 'You're only Anne of Green Gables,' she said earnestly, 'and I see you, just as you are looking now, whenever I try to imagine I'm the Lady Cordelia. But it's a million times nicer to be Anne of Green Gables than Anne of nowhere in particular, isn't it?'" p. 60*

Anne of Green Gables is a classic novel about Anne Shirley, a spirited orphan girl who finds acceptance and love in the rural town of Avonlea, Prince Edward Island, in the Victorian era. Aging Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert own a farm that is becoming too onerous for them to manage on their own. They arrange to take in an orphan boy to help out on the farm, but are surprised to find an eccentric, red-headed girl has been sent by mistake. Fortunately, Matthew sees Anne's inner beauty immediately and convinces Marilla to give the girl a chance. The rest of the book tells of Anne's many mishaps and her growing sense of family and friendship in the town.

Montgomery teaches young readers that differences in physical appearance and emotional makeup can be strengths rather than deficiencies: Anne begins her life with mistreatment by both adults and children because of her unusual red hair and hot temper, but she learns through Marilla and Matthew that she is loved, trusted and has potential to achieve scholastically and socially. Male students may find it difficult to relate to the female main character, but the book's universal themes and humorous events will likely win over many of them.

United States of America:
Random House
of Canada Limited,
Seal Books 1996
[original 1908]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-7704-2205-5

THE BREADWINNER

Deborah Ellis

The Breadwinner is a poignant novel about an 11-year-old girl who must take on the dangerous task of supporting her family in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. As a girl, Parvana is not allowed to attend school, but her bitterness about this is alleviated somewhat by the fact that she can accompany her father into the market where he makes a small living reading and writing letters for the illiterate. When the Taliban imprison Parvana's father, the family faces the horrifying prospect that, since women are not allowed outside the home alone, they will have no source of income. It is decided that Parvana, who can read and write, must disguise herself as a boy and take her father's place in the market. Later Parvana encounters Shauzia, another girl in disguise, and they decide to increase their income by collecting and selling bones from a bombed cemetery to a bone merchant. This experience in particular affects Parvana deeply and makes her long for a safer, easier life.

> *"'We have to remember this,' Parvana said. 'When things get better and we grow up, we have to remember that there was a day when we were kids when we stood in a graveyard and dug up bones to sell so that our families could eat.'" p. 111*

Having worked with Afghan refugees, Deborah Ellis writes from a close knowledge of human rights abuses under the Taliban regime. Descriptions brutality and violence are particularly disturbing but ultimately *The Breadwinner* is a story celebrating the stamina and spirit of a young girl in the face of great odds. Providing readers with a review of the historical context of Kabul from 1978–2001 will prepare them for the harsh reality of war described throughout the text.

Toronto, ON:
Groundwood/Douglas &
McIntyre 2002
[original 2000]

paperback

ISBN 0-88899-416-8

ELLA ENCHANTED

Gail Carson Levine

> *"I broke away from him and began to run as the clock struck midnight. Char would have caught me in a moment, but Hattie must have held him somehow. Outside, a huge pumpkin stood uselessly in the line of carriages. I continued to flee. A white rat skittered across my path. Somewhere I lost one of my slippers. I ran on, listening for my pursuers." p. 221*

Ella Enchanted is a modern retelling of the Cinderella story. In this version, a foolish fairy curses the feisty heroine, Ella, with the "gift" of always being obedient. After her mother dies, 15-year-old Ella finds her only comfort in the sympathy of Prince Charmont and the tender love and care of Mandy, the cook and wise fairy godmother. Ella's father is a cold and distant man, anxious to get Ella off to finishing school as he takes up life with his wealthy new wife, Dame Olga. Ella's new stepsisters devise ways to make life miserable for her, and Ella decides her only hope is to run away and find Lucinda, the fairy who cursed her. She learns that Lucinda will be attending a wedding of two giants, and goes to meet her there, hoping she can convince Lucinda to rescind her gift.

Although the story is a fantasy, some allegorical connections can be made. First, the notion of magic is used to parody people who misuse power. Lucinda creates unending problems for people by assuming what will be good for them, while Mandy helps Ella by providing opportunities rather than magical certainties. Second, diverse groups of mythical characters interact to present themes of acceptance and tolerance.

New York, NY:
Harper Collins 1997

paperback

ISBN 0-06-440705-5

Awards:

Newbery Honor Book, 1998

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Gail Carson Levine*, 2001 [21 min. BPN 2075904].

EVERYTHING ON A WAFFLE

Polly Horvath

Everything on a Waffle is a humorous and positive portrayal of life in a small fishing and whaling community on Vancouver Island. The main character is Primrose Squarp, a young girl whose parents were lost at sea. Primrose is sure her parents will return but is relieved when her Uncle Jack arrives to look after her—even though his main focus seems to be on the town as a property development opportunity. Primrose's guidance counsellor at school has other developments in mind when she meets the handsome ex-military man.

> *"… at The Girl on the Red Swing if you ordered a steak it came on a waffle, if you ordered fish and chips it came on a waffle, if you ordered waffles they came on a waffle. Miss Bowzer said it gave the restaurant class."*
> *p. 24*

Miss Bowzer, head cook and owner of "The Girl on the Red Swing Restaurant" has her own ideas about what Primrose and the customers from town need: *everything on a waffle*. While Primrose patiently awaits her parents' return, she practises her culinary arts, recalling her mother's recipes or jotting down tips from Miss Bowzer. Each chapter concludes with a recipe: everything from carrots in an apricot glaze to, of course, waffles. The book illustrates how achievement means different things to different people, and promotes the idea that everyone has something to contribute to society regardless of gender, age, race or disability.

Toronto, ON:
Groundwood Books/Douglas
& McIntyre2002
[original 2001]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–88899–442–7

Awards:

Newbery Honor Book, 2002

I WAS A RAT!

Philip Pullman

"The doctor examined Roger all over and seemed to find only a healthy little boy. 'So what's this rodent delusion?' he said finally. 'Well, he says he was a rat,' said Bob. 'He's convinced of it.' 'A rat, were you?' said the doctor. 'When did you stop being a rat, then?' 'When I turned into a boy,' said Roger. 'Yes, I see.'" p. 26

I Was a Rat! is a humorous fantasy novel about an elderly couple, Bob, a cobbler, and Joan, a washerwoman, who take in a homeless, grubby boy named Roger who insists that he was, until quite recently, a rat. Bob and Joan are skeptical, but several incidents convince the couple that he may be telling the truth. Eventually we find out that this clever satire is revisiting the story of *Cinderella.*

The narrative detailing Roger's trials and tribulations is interspersed with pages from a local tabloid, *The Daily Scourge*. Their biggest story is about a monster found in the city's sewers, a monster being defended by so-called scientists who contend that the creature from the darkness is actually a human and should be spared extermination.

The news stories in *The Daily Scourge* are, of course, prime examples of media manipulation, half-truths and about-faces. Teachers will require time to discuss issues raised by the tabloid, including corporal punishment, juvenile crime, media responsibility, political reactions, fairness of the justice system, and treatment of children.

New York, NY: Random House Inc. 2002
[original 1999]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-440-41661-2

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

Linda Granfield

In Flanders Fields recounts a significant time in world history through John McCrae's famous poem. This book beautifully illustrates each line of the poem with a painting by Janet Wilson. These vivid impressions of battle-torn cities, hospital wards, cemeteries, and soldiers bring new meaning and immediacy to the poem. Between verses, Linda Granfield informs the reader with factual details about World War I, John McCrae's life, the battle of Ypres, the grim realities of trench warfare, and the memorials that continue today.

The poem itself can be read in different ways. Some see it as a call to arms, to the continuance of war. Alternatively, as Granfield suggests, some believe that "we continue to honour the memory of those who sacrificed themselves for a cause they believed to be great and just." Granfield provokes the reader to think about his or her individual perspective, and treats the issue with sensitivity and respect while still providing a realistic depiction of the First World War.

> *"... the Great War was unlike any other in history. It was a new and horrible artillery battle fought from rat-infested, water-filled trenches dug deep into foreign soil. There would be little noble about it, except the dedication of millions to fight for what they believed. Into the nightmarish terrain of the Western Front stepped John McCrae."*

Markham, ON:
Fitzhenry and Whiteside
Limited 2002
[original 1995]

paperback picture book
reissue

ISBN 0-7737-2991-7

ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS

Scott O'Dell

> *"... at dawn, as light spread across the sea, my first glance was toward the little harbor of Coral Cove. Every morning I would look for the ship there, thinking that it might have come in the night. And each morning I would see nothing except the birds flying over the sea."*
> *p. 57*

Island of the Blue Dolphins tells the true story of an Aboriginal girl, Karana, who spent eighteen years alone on San Nicolas, a tiny island off the California coast. The novel begins on the island with a battle raging between Aleut hunters and Russian fur traders. Karana's father and most of the other villagers are killed, leaving survivors to relocate to the mainland. As the ship is leaving, Karan realizes that her younger brother, Ramo, is not aboard and she returns to save him. Soon, though, a wild dog kills Ramo. Karana must survive alone on the island and, ironically, ends up relying on and befriending the leader of the dog pack that killed her brother. She is finally rescued after nearly eighteen years.

O'Dell's novel offers readers an opportunity to observe the ways of life of Aboriginal peoples before Spanish explorers discovered and took over this island. Survival and loyalty are the novel's underlying themes, as Karana is forced to figure out ways to live independently and successfully in the rugged habitat and accept her growing attachment to the wild dog that killed her brother.

New York, NY:
Bantam Doubleday Dell
Books for Young Readers
1987
[original 1960]

Paperback reissue

ISBN 0–440–43988–4

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1961

JULIE OF THE WOLVES

Jean Craighead George

"Here she was, watching wolves—she, Miyax, daughter of Kapugen, adopted child of Martha, citizen of the United States, pupil at the Bureau of Indian Affairs School in Barrow, Alaska, and thirteen-year-old wife of the boy Daniel. She shivered at the thought of Daniel, for it was he who had driven her to this fate." p. 10

Julie of the Wolves focuses on an Inuit girl, Miyax, who lives in a sealing camp with her father. When Miyax's father dies, her aunt is determined to see her niece live with her, attend school and become an English-speaking girl with an English name—Julie. However, when she turns thirteen, Julie agrees to honour the terms of a marriage arranged years before by her father and his friend Naka. Julie is assured that Daniel will be more of a brother than a husband, but when he gets drunk and tries to take advantage of her, Julie is forced to run away.

After finding her way to a port to attempt to board a ship for California, Julie ends up on the Alaskan tundra and becomes lost. Facing starvation, she discovers a wolf pack and slowly insinuates herself into their community where she is able to glean food from their kills. She recognizes in Amaroq, the leader of the pack, a creature who epitomizes the spirit of her people and their disappearing world.

Teachers will need to discuss the importance of using correct terminology when referring to cultural groups. The term "Eskimo," used throughout the text, is inappropriate by today's standards and should be replaced by the term "Inuit." The issues of childhood marriage, alcoholism and sexual harassment will also require sensitive discussion. Ultimately, though, the novel provides rich themes for discussion including a powerful plea for respecting and preserving nature, and living attuned to "the rhythm of the beasts and the land."

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *All about the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Julie of the Wolves,"* 2002 [22 min. BPN 2076104] and *Good Conversation: A Talk with Jean Craighead George,* 1991 [28 min. BPN 2075905].

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
1972

paperback novel

ISBN 0–06440–058–1

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1973

LITTLE BY LITTLE: A WRITER'S EDUCATION

Jean Little

> *"Little by little, I was sorting out when and whether belonging really mattered. Little by little, I was choosing to be me. Little by little, I was discovering what brought me joy and learning its price."*
> *p. 156*

Little by Little is Jean Little's autobiographical telling of some of the milestones in her personal and professional life. Little reveals how those who rejected or patronized her exacerbated her struggle with vision impairment. To balance this treatment, Little describes several important people and experiences in her teenage and adult life that bolstered her self-confidence. For example, her brother took her to a high school dance where the two proudly won a waltzing contest. She also emphasizes her admiration for her father who encouraged her to improve her writing skills and to become a professional writer.

Through these depictions, Little helps readers to appreciate how people can overcome many physical, social and emotional obstacles by relying on positive role models, maintaining a hopeful attitude, and challenging themselves to become better human beings.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Group,Penguin Books
1989
[original 1987]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–14–031737–6

MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A MOCKINGBIRD

Jean Little

Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird is a touching story about an eleven-year-old boy struggling with the illness and then the death of his father. The story begins during the summer holidays at a lakeside cottage where Jeremy Talbot is staying with his little sister and their aunt. Jeremy's best friends have moved away; his dad is in the hospital undergoing an operation for cancer; and his mom has been staying in town to be near the hospital. By the end of the summer, when Jeremy's father is finally able to come to the cottage, Jeremy begins to realize for the first time that his dad is dying.

> *"Tess came a step nearer to him. He flashed a glance at her and saw his own disbelief and sorrow mirrored in her eyes. All at once, he knew why he had come to find her. She had been the one person he could think of who would understand. She had spoken herself of her grandmother's death and her parents ... Something must have happened to her parents." p. 93*

Jeremy must deal with each new reality brought about by the start of school, the mother's daily drives to the hospital and the eventual death of his father.

Jean Little creates a realistic portrait of a family dealing with the illness and eventual loss of a parent. The novel captures the ambivalent feelings of an eleven-year-old who feels that he has to be courageous but still can not help giving in, at times, to the temptation to quarrel with a little sister or to think selfishly of his own desires. Although Little's representation is thoughtful and sensitive, teachers will need to carefully attend to students' feelings and backgrounds when discussing death, family illnesses and grieving the loss of a parent.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada 1984

paperback

ISBN 0-14-031737-6

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 1985

Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award, 1985

MANIAC MAGEE

Jerry Spinelli

"The ball, the batter, the pitcher all racing for home plate, and it was the batter, the new kid out of nowhere, who crossed the plate first ... And that's how Jeffrey Magee knocked the world's first frogball for a four-bagger. And how he came to be called Maniac." pp. 27–28

Maniac Magee is a tall-tale style novel in which Jerry Spinelli tells the origins of Maniac Magee, a boy who seems to arrive from nowhere and quickly shakes up the town of Two Mills. There, Magee meets many different people, learns how to read from an impoverished elderly man, and befriends an African-American girl named Amanda Beale. He also causes a bit of trouble in Two Mills by intercepting a pass at a football game, rescuing another boy from bullies, and stepping into a little league baseball game and connecting with Giant John McNab's fastball for half a dozen home runs. Of course, this last episode means that McNab and his gang of Cobras are out to get him.

Nobody can believe it when they realize this white-skinned maniac is staying with Amanda Beale's family in the heart of the black side of town. Spinelli's novel presents such current issues as civil rights, racism, and bullying with poetry, humour and a sense for what it means to be part of a global human family.

New York, NY:
Little, Brown & Company 1990

paperback

ISBN 0–31680–906–3

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1991

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Jerry Spinelli*, 1994 [20 min. BPN 2075906].

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

Norton Juster

The Phantom Tollbooth is a clever fantasy about a young boy named Milo, who thinks that life is very boring and everything is a waste of time until one day a gigantic package arrives in his bedroom. Milo discovers that the package contains a tollbooth, and once he assembles it and climbs into the small electric car, he finds himself on the road to an adventure of mind-boggling proportions. Milo and the reader journey to a fantastical world of hilarious puns and double-entendres.

While motoring Beyond Expectations, Milo is rescued from the Doldrums by Tock, a watchdog with a gigantic clock for a body. Tock becomes his guide as they travel to Dictionopolis, a city of letters and words. In the word market, they are befriended by the Spelling Bee, who flies about trying to dazzle everyone with his spelling proficiency, and the Humbug, a blowhard beetle in dapper dress. This journey continues until Milo and Tock set off toward the Mountains of Ignorance to rescue the twin princesses, Rhyme and Reason.

Although the tone and language of the novel are witty and light, underpinning the story are themes of surviving, making choices, dealing with unpredictable circumstances and learning the importance of personal goals.

> *"'Now would you like a long or a short sentence?' 'A short one, if you please,' said Milo. 'Good,' said the judge, rapping his gavel three times. 'I always have trouble remembering the long ones. How about I am? That's the shortest sentence I know.' Everyone agreed that it was a fair sentence, and the judge continued: 'There will also be a small additional penalty of six million years in prison. Case closed.'" p. 63*

New York, NY:
Random House Children's
Books 2001
[original 1961]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-394-82037-1

THE ROOT CELLAR

Janet Lunn

> *"After a while her senses began to settle, and as they did the world became real to her as it had never seemed real before. Colors were brighter. Smells were stronger. Sounds were sharper. She looked around. She was sitting in the Chambers Street railroad depot in New York City in August, 1865." p. 209*

The Root Cellar is a time-slip fantasy novel about a girl named Rose, who enters an abandoned root cellar and finds herself transported back to 1862. When her grandmother dies suddenly, Rose goes to live with her aunt and uncle and their four children in the family's old Ontario farmhouse. Rose discovers that a resident ghost who warns her that she 'shifts' from the past to the present haunts the house. Indeed, Rose herself is soon transported back to a time when the Civil War was raging in the United States. Before she finds her way back to the present, Susan and Will befriend Rose.

After her first adventure, time in the present seems tortuously slow to Rose. In contrast, her trips into the past hurtle by with drama and excitement. Her friendship with Susan and Will bring Rose face-to-face with the realities of the Civil War. Lunn invites young readers to consider poverty and slavery. Lunn also presents the political relationship of the United States and Canada after the Civil War as well as various aspects of Canada's geography in the present and past.

As Rose struggles with being an orphan, grapples with her dual realities and eventually discovers the joy of remaining in the present, readers will begin to think about how this character adapts to a new family, makes difficult choices and copes with being thrust into harsh life situations beyond her control.

Toronto, ON:
Random House of Canada
Limited 2001
[original 1981]

paperback reissue

ISBN 0–14038–036–1

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 1982

SILVERWING

Kenneth Oppel

🍁

Silverwing is Toronto writer Kenneth Oppel's first novel in an animal fantasy series that has quickly gained wide popularity. The main character, Shade, is a young silver wing bat. What Shade lacks in size and power, he makes up for in curiosity and courageousness. In fact, it is his curiosity that spurs him to watch the sunrise, breaking the ancient taboo that all bats are strictly nocturnal. With this breach, enemy owls declare war and attack the bats' nursery tree with burning sticks of wood.

"He was in the sun. In the light of day. No bat had been here for millions of years. He could feel the heat of it on his wings, the fur on his back, and even in the cold winter day, it still felt glorious. It felt like victory." p. 250

Escaping from the fire, Shade joins the colony as it begins its migration, but he is separated from the group by a fierce storm. Blown out to sea, he finds sanctuary on an island and is befriended by Marina, a bright wing bat who has been banded by humans. Once they get back to the mainland, Shade and Marina encounter a couple of rogue vampire bats, Goth and Throbb, who offer to protect them from warring pigeons and owls. As they try to catch up with the colony, Shade and Marina must deal with predator attacks, harsh environmental conditions and a growing threat from the vampire bats.

While offering an engaging fantasy storyline, Oppel also provides readers with a wealth of information about bats, including their eating habitats and migratory patterns. The book is also woven through with rich themes of betrayal, friendship and bravery that readers can interact with on many levels depending on their maturity.

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins 1997

paperback

ISBN 0-00-648179-5

Awards:

Mr. Christie's Book Award, 1998

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, 1998

TALKING WITH ARTISTS: VOLUME THREE

Pat Cummings

> *"I feel very fortunate to be able to illustrate children's books and be at home with my family. It is as if every day is a rainy day from my childhood and I am allowed to stay inside and color in my own imaginary world."*
> *p. 29, Jane Dyer*

Talking with Artists provides biographical sketches of thirteen different artists that include practical advice for art enthusiasts of all ages. Encouraging quotes and words of wisdom are designed to inspire readers, and a consistent theme throughout the narratives is to be bold and take risks because mistakes are a necessary, integral part of the creative process.

The text includes well-known samples of each artist's work, to give students a better appreciation for the artists' explanations of their professional growth. Cummings also includes childhood drawings by each artist that cleverly bring a sense of innocence and humanity to these accomplished professionals.

New York, NY:
Houghton Mifflin
Company, Clarion Books, 1999

hardcover picture book

ISBN 0–395–89132–9

TUCK EVERLASTING

Natalie Babbitt

Tuck Everlasting tells the story of the Tuck family, who have unwittingly drunk from a fountain of youth to find that immortality is a charm with a dark side. The Tucks were shunned by their neighbourhood amid talk of witchcraft, and his wife and family abandoned Miles Tuck when he stayed young while they grew older. Eventually, the youthful Tucks were forced into hiding.

"You can't have living without dying. So you can't call it living, what we got. We just are, we just be, like rocks beside the road." p. 64

Winnie Foster becomes an unsuspecting victim of this mess when she witnesses a handsome teen drinking from a spring and insists that she too needs a drink. When he refuses her, she finds herself being kidnapped by other members of this strange clan. The Tucks are forced to tell Winnie their secret and now she is faced with a terrible dilemma.

Teachers will need to address the representation of a murder as warranted within the circumstances of this fantasy and the underlying issues of the sanctity of human life. Students will be encouraged to think about natural rhythm of life, and death and the desire of mankind to control it.

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *All about the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Tuck Everlasting,"* 2002 [21 min. BPN 2076106] and *Good Conversation: A Talk with Natalie Babbitt*, 1995 [21 min. BPN 2075914].

Toronto, ON:
Douglas & McIntyre 1975

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-374-48009-5

THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

John Christopher

"Oxymandias had spoken of men working in mines underground to get metals for the Tripods, of the Tripods hunting men, of human beings serving them in their cities. But even if those things were true, they must happen far away. None of it touched this secure and pleasant life." p. 134

The White Mountains is a science fiction novel set in a ruined world of the future where giant creatures called Tripods use a ritualized "capping" ceremony to rob adults of their free will. When the main character, Will Parker, realizes that the time for his capping is quickly approaching, he decides to run away with the help of a mysterious outsider. Will is joined by his cousin Henry, and later by another adolescent, Jean Paul, whom they quickly dub "Beanpole."

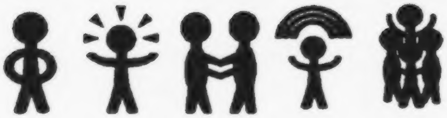
As the three try to reach The White Mountains, where it is rumoured that people are free from the Tripods, they explore the ruins of a gigantic metropolis, and eventually find themselves in strange, but beautiful chateau with knights and ladies. Even here, though, the Tripods rule and capping ceremonies occur twice a year. The three teens decide to slip away during the excitement of the next ceremony, but Will faces a difficult decision when he falls in love with the beautiful young Eloise, Queen of the Tournament.

The book's themes of freedom, friendship and personal growth offer opportunities for rich classroom discussion. The potentially stereotypical and racially discriminatory language used is intended to reflect the time period represented in the novel; teachers will need to make students aware of this fact and discuss the social and political culture of the early 1900s.

New York, NY: Simon &
Schuster Children's Publishing
Division 1999
[original 1967]

paperback reissue

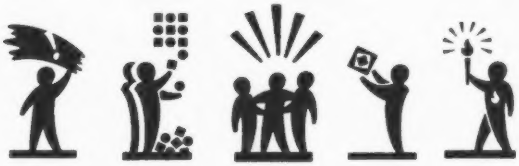
ISBN 0-02-042711-5



Grade 7

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



ALIEN SECRETS

Annette Curtis Klause

"He took the chocolate gingerly and carefully placed it into his mouth. His eyes grew big, and his narrow lips pinched together. Oh, God. I've killed him, Puck thought. But his eyes closed, and his purple tongue snaked out to lick his lips. His throat glugged fast in pleasure. 'A taste wonderful,' he said. 'My thanks.' He likes chocolate, Puck thought triumphantly. He's a real person." p. 47

Alien Secrets opens with feisty, thirteen-year-old Robin Goodfellow (nicknamed Puck) witnessing a fight on the evening before she boards the *Cat's Cradle*, a spaceship bound for the planet Aurora where her parents work. On board, an alien passenger, Hush, appears upset and later tells Puck that the sacred statue he's been carrying back to his home planet has been stolen. Hush also tells her that, ironically, their spaceship was once a Grakk slaveship that carried his forefathers to a terrible destiny. In fact, more than one passenger has heard the eerie cries of slave spirits on the *Cat's Cradle.*

The story of Hush and his race is very much a parable of what happened to enslaved people throughout Earth's history. However, the story is suspenseful and written at an average to below-average reading level. In the tradition of science fiction mystery, every chapter ends with a cliff hanger and there are a variety of suspicious characters: Michael, a young hyperspace navigator intern; Cubuk, the steely-eyed man from the fight; and Ms. Dante and Ms. Florette, two fussy ladies who make disparaging remarks about aliens.

New York, NY: Bantam
Doubleday Dell Books for
Young Readers, Yearling, 1995
[original 1993]

ISBN 0–440–41061–4

THE CAY

Theodore Taylor

The Cay is set in 1942, when Americans were becoming nervous over the possibilities of German attacks. After a British tanker burns and sinks within sight of Willemstad, the Enrights decide that eleven-year-old Phillip and his mother should book passage on a small freighter heading to Florida. When the ship is torpedoed, Phillip is flung into the water and soon discovers that he is blind. Only Timothy, an elderly negro deckhand, and the ship's cat also survive. They drift for three days before spotting a small cay. Timothy begins a regimen to help Phillip become self-sufficient. At first Phillip rails against being ordered around, but, after Timothy nurses him through malaria, Phillip realizes his love for his protector. When the island is hit by a hurricane, Timothy even protects the boy's body with his own by lashing them to a palm tree. When Timothy dies, Phillip must face the challenge of surviving on the cay alone. Phillip finally regains his sight, but realizes he has really learned how to see and what to see from Timothy.

The Cay is an engaging survival tale that draws on Theodore Taylor's experience with the merchant marine during World War II. It is also the story of a boy's learning important truths about living with a disability, caring for others and overcoming racial prejudice. Timothy emerges as the hero of the novel, a figure of great compassion, humility and dignity.

"Something happened to me that day on the cay. I'm not quite sure what it was even now, but I had begun to change. I said to Timothy, 'I want to be your friend.' He said softly, 'Young bahss, you 'ave always been my friend.' I said, 'Can you call me Phillip instead of young boss?' 'Phill-eep,' he said warmly." p. 72

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Theodore Taylor*, 1998
[21 min. BPN 2075918].

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Book,
Dell Yearling, 2002
[original 1969]

ISBN 0–440–41663–9

CHARLIE WILCOX

Sharon E. McKay

"'... I am fourteen, only a few years younger than these soldiers. And I am a Newfoundlander, too, and you said yourself that I've done good work so far, and, well, going home seems-cowardly.' There, he said it. He was not a coward, and if God himself had seen fit to drop him in this spot, well, made sense that he was to do his bit right alongside everyone else." p. 145

Charlie Wilcox is a blend of fact and fiction that chronicles the adventures of a Newfoundland boy who is inadvertently put to sea with soldiers heading for the front during World War I. After a successful operation to repair his club foot, fourteen-year-old Charlie is certain he'll be able to go with his dad to hunt seals, but his mother is determined that he'll go to St. John's and complete his high school. Once in the city, Charlie decides to run away and join a sealing vessel. He finagles his way onto a ship and stows away inside a crate, only to discover later that the back-home bully has made him the butt of a cruel joke—Charlie is on a troop ship headed for England.

From England, Charlie decides to cross to France and serve as a Red Cross volunteer with the Canadian hospital at Etaples. There, the blood, mire and horror of trench warfare are conveyed through Charlie's fourteen-year-old eyes. As Charlie takes on increasing responsibility, he demonstrates the book's themes of courage, perseverance, personal growth and the acceptance of differences.

Ontario writer Sharon E. McKay, the great-niece of Charlie Wilcox, captures a feel of the historical period as well as the flavour of Newfoundland's customs and speech. The novel is written at an average reading level and a glossary is included.

Toronto, ON: Penguin Group,
Penguin Canada, 2003

ISBN 0–14–301470–6

COWBOYS DON'T CRY

Marilyn Halvorson

Cowboys Don't Cry is set in a small rural community in the southern Alberta foothills in the 1970s. Shane Morgan, a bright fourteen-year-old, and his father, Josh Morgan, return to the farm left to Shane by his grandfather. Shane is thrilled to finally have a place to call home where he and his dad can keep their horses. In the four years between his mother's death and the inheritance of the farm, Shane has watched his father, once a bull-riding champion on the rodeo circuit, sink into depression, despair and alcoholism. When Shane gets home from a rough day at his new school and discovers his Dad has gone into Cochrane with an old buddy, likely to drink, he carelessly lets the horses out to graze. When the golden palomino that belonged to his mother becomes hung up on a barbed wire fence, Casey, a neighbour girl, and her mother, the town veterinarian, help rescue the horse.

"I started to say, 'What do you mean, too late? You can still be a champ,' but I didn't say it. Because, for once in his life, Dad was seeing things like they really were. He was 36 years old, he had a kid to be responsible for, a ranch he couldn't leave, a drinking problem he couldn't drown, and a memory he couldn't bury. He was right. It was too late." p. 69

While there are some predictable elements to the story, Halvorson uses a richly-detailed rural backdrop to show Shane's resiliency as he struggles to fit into a new community while dealing with his father's grief and alcoholism. Teachers will require time to discuss the issues of family dysfunction and alcoholism.

Toronto, ON: Stoddart Kids, 1998
[original 1987]

ISBN 0–7736–7429–2

DAYS OF TERROR

Barbara Smucker

Days of Terror portrays the plight of a Mennonite German family living in southern Ukraine during the World War I and the Russian Revolution. Although all Mennonites are pacifists, young Mennonite men were drafted as hospital workers or put into labour camps. When the army disintegrates with the outbreak of revolution in 1917, Otto Neufeld, a Red Cross worker, returns home. Ten-year-old Peter is thrilled about his brother's return, but a restless Otto soon leaves to make his own way in the world. He returns at Christmas with news of the intensifying civil war. Throughout the following year, invading soldiers and marauders burn much of the village, leaving the survivors stricken with typhus. Mennonite communities in North America rally to send food and encourage friends and family to leave Russia and emigrate to the new world. It is what the Neufelds decide to do, enduring a long journey to Winnipeg.

Peter, a gentle, artistic and caring youth, is presented in sharp contrast to his cruel and hostile surroundings. Smucker draws from her own Mennonite background in this riveting reminder of fragility in an uncertain world and the strength of a family's bonds. Providing students with an historical and political context of the former U.S.S.R. from 1914 to 1924 will prepare them for the harsh reality of war the book portrays.

> *"He hit harder and harder at the leafless tree until floods of bitterness surged inside him and seemed to rush through his swinging arms into the splitting woods. He hated the men who pounded at their door night after night. Why must they curse and steal from his family? Why must they point their loaded guns at Mother and Aunt Lizzie? Why must they destroy the beautiful village of Tiegen?" p. 95*

Toronto, ON: Penguin Group,
Puffin Canada, 1981
[original 1979]

ISBN 0–14–031306–0

Awards:

Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award, 1980

Canada Council Children's Literature Prize, 1979

GUTS

Gary Paulsen

Guts is Gary Paulsen's autobiographical response to his readers' frequent questions about his life and his inspiration for his novels. The book is a short, easy and a compelling read, and a valuable nonfiction companion to the author's Brian Robeson series. Paulsen writes about his early determination to create bows and arrows from scratch, details the skills a person can develop to keep from starving in the wilds, and describes how hordes of insects can drive animals and men insane in northern woods.

Graphic descriptions of hunting may be offensive to some readers. He also reviews his own experiences with heart-attack victims, plane crashes and a number of other high-drama incidents that contributed to *Hatchet*, included in the ELA 10-2 list, and its sequels.

"Years later, when I came to write Hatchet and the scene where the pilot is dying, I remembered this man of all the men I saw dead from heart attacks and car wrecks and farm accidents. I remembered him and his eyes and I put him in the plane next to Brian because he was, above all things, real, and I wanted the book to be real." p. 6

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Books,
Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0–440–40712–5

THE HOBBIT

J.R.R. Tolkien

"Out jumped the goblins, big goblins, great ugly-looking goblins, lots of goblins, before you could say rock and blocks. There were six to each dwarf, at least, and two even for Bilbo; and they were all grabbed and carried through the crack, before you could say tinder and flint. But not Gandalf." p. 57

The Hobbit is a prelude to the popular *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. It is a fantasy saga set in the land of Middle Earth. Bilbo Baggins is a Shire Hobbit—a peace-loving creature who lives a life free of adventure. Gandalf the Wizard whisks him off for a series of adventures with a group of dwarves to seek a pot of gold that was stolen from their ancestors by Smaug the dragon. Along the way, the group encounters giant spiders, unfriendly elves and a creature named Gollum from whom Bilbo wins a magic ring in a riddle contest.

Many elements of *The Hobbit* are familiar archetypes: a quest must be undertaken, there is a mentor, good battles evil, the protagonist must find strength and courage within, and finally a significant character change occurs. Tolkien uses allusions and borrowings from ancient Norse legends. Many students will enjoy Tolkien's original vocabulary as they escape into his entertaining world.

London, England:
HarperCollins Publishers, 1999
[original 1937]
310 pages

ISBN: 0–261–10221–4

I AM DAVID

Anne Holm

I Am David follows a twelve-year-old Jewish boy fleeing from a concentration camp during the Holocaust to find safety in Denmark. David is bewildered and suspicious when a guard he has always despised arranges for his escape from the concentration camp, but he is willing to take the risk and follow the guard's plan of travelling to Salonica where he can work his way northward to Denmark. David finds his way to Salonica and stows away on a ship headed for Italy. When he is discovered, David experiences the first of many kind acts from strangers. Later, when David rescues a young girl named Maria from a burning shed, the grateful family takes him in. However, after a few weeks, David realizes Maria's mother is nervous about their mysterious houseguest and he leaves, continuing the long route to Denmark.

I Am David is a testimony to claiming one's identity and individuality. The novel shows the plight of countless children after World War II and the random relocation of shattered families, while emphasizing the value of courage, resilience and trust. Throughout David's profoundly moving journey to find his roots in Denmark during the 1950s, the reader shares his experiences as he discovers a world that is dramatically different from the only world he has ever known—the dull, colourless, mean existence of the camp.

> *"David breathed deeply, hardly noticing the cold bite in the air. He was David. He was free and strong. He was on the move again, but this time he knew where he was making for. There might be many difficulties ahead before he reached his goal, but difficulties could be overcome ... The long winter had passed, and he was going down to meet the spring."* p. 167

London, England: Egmont
Children's Books Limited,
Mammoth, 2000
[original 1965]

ISBN 0–7497–0136–6

Awards:

Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, 1992

An American Library Association Notable Book, 1992

MYSTERY IN THE FROZEN LANDS

Martyn Godfrey

> *"Despite an outcry from the public, naval officials believed the Inuit stories and declared that all people on Sir John's voyage were dead. For me it is proof of nothing. The questions have yet to be answered. I have not given up hope that my uncle is still alive. That is why I am here, frozen in a foreign sea." p. 13*

Mystery in the Frozen Lands is a historical novel that recounts the disaster of the Franklin Expedition through the journal of Peter Griffin, a fictional teenage cabin boy and nephew of Franklin, who has joined a mission to discover the fate of the lost expedition. In Peter's first entry, dated November 10, 1858, *The Fox* is locked in ice and the suicide of one of the crew is fresh in Peter's mind. Through the following months, he writes of the cramped quarters, the monotonous routine of ship life, and his friendship with Anton, a young Inuit from Greenland, whose job it is to care for the dogs.

In February, Peter is allowed to join Captain McClintock's expedition by sledge along the Boothia Peninsula, where they meet Aboriginal hunters with items that could likely have come from Franklin's men. In April, Peter joins another expedition exploring the west coast of King William Island. Eventually they find evidence of the Franklin Expedition including a large wooden boat with a sledge beneath it and two skeletons inside.

The author was inspired to write *Mystery in the Frozen Lands* when he read about the discovery of the graves from the Franklin Expedition on Beechey Island and the likelihood of lead poisoning contributing to mental disorders among the officers. Although an easy read, this is not a typical Martyn Godfrey novel. The story deals with themes of cultural difference and human reactions during crises.

Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1988

ISBN 1-55028-137-2

PEACEKEEPERS

Dianne Linden

Peacekeepers is about the challenges of thirteen-year-old Nellie Letitia Hopkins. Nell's mother, Alice, is a reservist in the Canadian Armed Forces on a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. Nell and her brother Mikey have moved in with their bachelor uncle who means well but is eccentric and doesn't know much about kids. Nell resents her mother leaving and worries that she will be killed in a land mine explosion so she refuses to answer any of the e-mails her mother sends her.

When both Nell and Mikey are forced to attend new schools, Mikey does all right but Nell becomes the target of increasingly vicious bullying. She knows she should speak up, but instead takes on the attitude of a victim, becoming withdrawn, refusing help from school staff and administration, and obsessing that the dangers she feels make her life similar to her mother's in Bosnia. Sam Hashi, the one friend that Nell makes, tries to support her as much as he is able and Nell opens up a little. Just when life seems to be improving, she is assaulted on her way home from school. In the end, Nell must dig deep within herself and accept all the help that is offered in order to turn her life around. Teachers will need to take time to discuss the issue of bullying with students.

"After Mr. Melnyk moved on, Shane gave me the rogue animal look again. 'You'd better be careful, Smelly,' he said. 'I can make your life miserable.' 'I don't think so,' I said back, which goes to show what I know about anything." p. 5

Regina, SK: Coteau Books, 2003

ISBN 1–55050–271–9

SEES BEHIND TREES

Michael Dorris

"Then, from her sack she brought out a tightly woven sash, placed it over my eyes, and tied it with a length of grapevine. 'What are you doing?' I wanted to know. 'Shhh,' she said. 'Describe this place to me.' 'But I've never been here before and I can't see.' 'Shhh,' she said again. 'Look with your ears.'" p. 5

Sees Behind Trees, set in North America's eastern woodlands in the 16th century, follows the journey of an Aboriginal boy who compensates for his poor eyesight by using his other senses to "see" things around him in a way that no one else in his village can. Walnut is frustrated that his poor eyesight makes hunting difficult, and afraid that he may never earn his adult name, until the expert on hunting arranges for a special trial, explaining that the village needs "someone with the ability to see what can't be seen." Walnut is able to identify the approach of a man with a limp so far away that none of the other contestants comes close to seeing him. The weroance pronounces Walnut's adult name: Sees Behind Trees.

The man with the limp is Gray Fire, an old man who wants to make a trek back to a place of incredible beauty where a past mishap resulted in his limp. He asks Sees Behind Trees to use his special abilities to help him in his quest. The journey is filled with adversity, spirituality and self-discovery, and ultimately presents Sees Behind Trees with the sorrow of losing a friend and the joy of saving a child. The book presents an appreciation of the historical context and demonstrates cultural diversity in a very accessible read.

New York, NY: Hyperion
Paperbacks, 1999
[original 1996]

ISBN 0-7868-1357-1

SKELLIG

David Almond

Skellig is a strange and wonderful story about a boy who finds a mysterious, sarcastic birdlike man living under a pile of cobwebs in the garage of his family's dilapidated new house. With his parents preoccupied with his chronically sick baby sister, Michael is often on his own and is drawn to the decrepit garage. It is packed with ancient furniture, rolled up carpets, pipes, spiders, bluebottle flies, and a man who looks like he might be dead—but isn't. In the days following his discovery, Michael begins tending the man, who he learns is named Skellig. He finally shares his secret with Mina, the quirky, strong-willed girl next door, and the two of them make a plan to try to help Skellig.

Skellig combines themes of change, faith and friendship with frequent references to William Blake, science and art. The startling introduction sets the novel's haunting and atmosphere. True to the voice of the young narrator, the prose is spare: brief sentences, dialogue exchanges with little elaboration, details that would catch the eye of a boy. Put it all together and it evolves into a rich, high interest story with many levels to study.

"She unfastened the buttons of his jacket. She began to pull his jacket down over his shoulders. 'No,' he squeaked. 'Trust me,' she whispered. He didn't move. She slid the sleeves down over his arms, took the jacket right off him. We saw what both of us had dreamed we might see. Beneath his jacket were wings that grew out through rips in his shirt."
p. 94

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2001
[original 1998]

ISBN 0–440–22908–1

Awards:

New York Times Best Book of the Year, 1999

School Library Journal Best Books of the Year, 1999

THE SLAVE DANCER

Paula Fox

> *"I played on against the wind, the movement of the whip and my own self-disgust, and finally the slaves began to lift their feet, the chains attached to the shackles around their ankles forming an iron dirge, below the trills of my tune."*
> *pp. 69–70*

The Slave Dancer is the Newbery Medal award-winning story of thirteen-year-old Jessie Bollier who plays his fife at the great market on the levee in New Orleans to supplement his widowed mother's dress sewing business. One night Jessie is kidnapped and forced aboard *The Moonlight,* a slave ship en route to Africa. Jessie discovers it will be his job to play his fife when the captives are brought on deck to exercise. During the voyage to Africa, Jessie witnesses the cruelty of the ship's corrupt Captain Cawthorne, but nothing can prepare him for the horror of loading black men, women and children into *The Moonlight's* cramped hold.

Their return journey is plagued with disease and bad weather. Jessie's disgust at the slaves' living conditions is coupled by the growing realization that he is an unwitting accomplice to this atrocity. When a fierce storm hits off the coast of Cuba and the ship goes down, Jessie finds himself and a black boy about his age the sole survivors.

The story of *The Slave Dancer* is almost unbearable at times, but demands to be told. The difficult content is softened somewhat by Paula Fox's challenging, lyrical prose and by the sifting of the story through Jessie's young eyes. Providing an historical context is one way to prepare students for the racism, graphic violence and offensive language (i.e., "nigger") that Jessie witnesses.

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1975
[original 1973]

ISBN 0–440–96132–7

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Paula Fox,* 1995 [25 min. BPN 2075915].

SOUNDER

William Armstrong

Sounder is an engrossing and often heartbreaking tale of a black family's courage and endurance during the early years of the twentieth century in the southern United States. When a sharecropper, driven to desperation by hunger and poverty, steals a ham that he feels he has rightfully earned, the county sheriff tracks him down. As the sharecropper is taken away in a wagon, the family dog, Sounder, chases after the wagon and is shot by one of the deputies. The wounded animal disappears into the night, adding to the devastation of the family. Weeks later, it seems a small miracle when Sounder shows up on the shanty porch, emaciated and injured.

"His mother fed him and said, 'Child, child ... Some people is born to keep. Some is born to lose. We was born to lose, I reckon. But Sounder might come back.' But weeks went by, and Sounder did not come back." p. 52

In the following months that turn into years, the boy travels in search of his father who has been sentenced to hard labour. The boy must find him somewhere among the prison farms and stone quarries.

Except for Sounder, Armstrong does not name any of the characters in this novel. By referring simply to "the man," "the boy," "his mother" and "the younger children," Armstrong moves the story from being the plight of one individual family to the tale of an entire people. Stronger readers will find this a rewarding novel.

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Sounder* (feature film) [90 min. BPN 2079201].

New York, NY:
HarperTrophy, 1972
[original 1969]

ISBN 0-06-440020-4

Awards:

Newbery Award Winner, 1970

TOUCH OF THE CLOWN

Glen Huser

> *"... Cosmo wipes his finger through the white of his cheek and uses the greasepaint to make a mark on Nathan's cheek. He does it to each of us in turn ... 'The touch of the clown,' Cosmo says in a voice so soft it is almost a whisper. 'We pass it on from one to another. It was given to me by my clown-master. A little smudge of Clown White. It enters our pores and we are changed forever ...'" p. 123*

Touch of the Clown is a sensitively written novel about a neglected thirteen-year-old, Barbara Stanwyck Kobleimer, who finds support and friendship from Cosmo Farber, a clown instructor living with AIDS. Since her mother's death, Barbara's father and grandmother drink the days away in front of the television, while Barbara looks after Livvy, her demanding little sister. One summer day, Livvy chases a ball onto a busy street and is struck by a man riding a bicycle. Right from the start, Barbara realizes this man in multicoloured clothes is someone extraordinary. Once they get Livvy off the street and onto the boulevard, Cosmo pulls some balls out of his backpack and adds Livvy's ball to them in a juggling act.

When Cosmo realizes Barbara's situation, he urges her to register in an upcoming clown workshop while Livvy attends an art class nearby. Barbara forges her father's name on the application form and sneaks out of the house to attend. There, Cosmo helps Barbara develop a belief in her own creativity and talent and an awareness of people who can love and help her. Although Cosmo ultimately passes away, he leaves Barbara with the confidence she needs to seek help. Teachers will require time to discuss the issues of family dysfunction, alcoholism, AIDS and death.

Toronto, ON: Groundwood
Books, 1999

ISBN 0-88899-357-9

VIRTUAL WAR

Gloria Skurzynski

Virtual War is set in 2080, on the brink of a "virtual" war to be fought through simulations. World federations will battle for twenty volcanic islands in the south seas that were once contaminated, as most of the earth was, but now, finally, are cleansed. Fourteen-year-old Corgan has led a privileged existence in the company of virtual beings in return for his willingness to train for the war. With the war only a few days away, Supreme Council introduces Sharla, a female "cryptanalyst" with an uncanny ability to break code, and a mutant boy, Brig, a genius at strategy. At night, Sharla manages to sneak her teammates out of the compound for a look at the world outside. These glimpses convince Corgan that they should bargain for their release and relocation to the Islands of Hiva if they win the war. Eventually, Corgan makes difficult decisions based on the inner strength and spirit nurtured by the love and friendship of his fellow warriors.

As Lois Lowry does in *The Giver*, Skurzynski offers a new world where individuality and humanity are sacrificed for a smoothly running society. As Corgan finds out, virtual war has all of the horrific dimensions of the wars that have plagued human history, minus the bloodshed and pain. Other issues explored in the novel include isolation and desensitization.

> *"Corgan felt his stomach heave as the simulated battleground grew sticky with blood. He swallowed hard and focused on his soldiers, forgetting that they were only virtual images no bigger than the height of his hand. He smelled ozone and smoke and chemicals—'Gas attack!' Brig screamed. 'Get them out of there, Corgan!'"* p. 116

New York, NY: Simon &
Schuster Children's Publishing
Division, Simon Pulse, 1999
[original 1997]

ISBN 0-689-82425-4

WHO IS FRANCES RAIN?

Margaret Buffie

> *"She grew clearer and clearer, almost like a Polaroid picture developing ... 'She's turning ... going back into the cabin. Wait. Now she's back with a pair of binoculars. It must be Frances Rain. It has to be. Omigod! What am I seeing? I'm seeing a ghost. I don't believe it!'" pp. 100–101*

Combining ghost story and time-shift fantasy, ***Who Is Frances Rain?*** dramatizes the connections between the past and the present. Lizzie and her two siblings have always spent summer holidays at grandmother's cabin on Lake Winnipeg. The only difference this summer, when Lizzie is fifteen, is that her mother and new husband are joining them. Life has turned into a perpetual argument. For solitude, Lizzie explores Rain Island, where she stumbles across the crumbling remains of a small cabin and a pair of unbroken wire-rimmed spectacles. When Lizzie puts the glasses on, the world shifts and she realizes she is seeing Rain Island in the past, when the cabin still stood there. In recurring visits, she sees a stark, solitary woman and a girl who is wearing the spectacles. In the days that follow, Lizzie finds out everything she can about the mysterious Frances Rain, who chose to live—and die—by herself on the island. Like the pieces of Gram's jigsaw puzzle everyone works on, Lizzie begins to see that the mystery of Frances Rain connects to her own family. Lizzie's narrative voice is funny, self-reflective and heartfelt as it reveals a teenage girl's growing awareness of herself as an integral part of her family and a link between generations.

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press Ltd., 1987

ISBN 0-919964-83-4

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Young Adult Canadian Book Award, 1987

WILLA'S NEW WORLD

Barbara Demers

Willa's New World begins in London, 1795, with recently-orphaned 15-year-old Willa Thompson boarding a merchant ship going to a Hudson's Bay post in the New World. Willa endures the cramped, difficult journey and makes her way to York Factory.

There, Master George, the chief factor, who becomes her protector, gives her a job as a clerk. Amelia, an Aboriginal cook, befriends Willa and tells her about the customs and beliefs of her people. With the support of these two, Willa finally begins to adapt to her new life, but when Willa declines a marriage proposal from George, he "transfers" her to Fort Edmonton House. Amelia's brother, cousin and mother escort her there. During this long and difficult journey, she suffers a vicious attack by one of the townspeople, but ultimately begins to appreciate the beauty of the new world and its people.

> *"Visions of parties past replayed in my head. Drunken brawls, blood, emergencies, shouts, and gunshots. Often impromptu, spilling out from the kitchen to the hall to outside. For some, Amelia said, the entire visit to the fort was a party—a reprieve from the arduous work trapping and hauling furs, traversing the land and water—a reprieve from the hazards of winter."*
> *p. 167*

Regina, SK: Coteau Books, 1999

ISBN 1–55050–150–X

Awards:

R. Ross Annette Award for Children's Literature, 2000

THE WRECKERS

Iain Lawrence

"Her voice dropped, and she shivered. 'The law said that anything that came from a wreck was free for salvage. But for it to be a wreck, no one could survive ... So it was the law, John, that made the devil's work of wrecking.' 'Because,' I said, 'they killed the people who got to shore.' 'Yes. It came to that.' She sat again, close beside me. 'But it got worse. It got much worse.'" p. 48

The Wreckers is the first novel in Iain Lawrence's highly accessible High Seas Trilogy. This fast-paced, suspenseful story is about a village off the Cornwall coast where, the reader learns, people are luring ships to crash on the rocks so they can take their goods. The story is written from the perspective of 14-year-old John Spencer, who is taking his first ocean voyage, when the ship is lured to a dangerous part of the Cornwall coast and wrecked during a fierce storm. This casts John into the hands of the Wreckers, who would rather have no survivors to tell the tale of false beacons flashing along the cliffs. John finds safety with a family that has flourished from the spoils awarded through legitimate salvage rights, but he suspects the master of the house may be in league with the Wreckers.

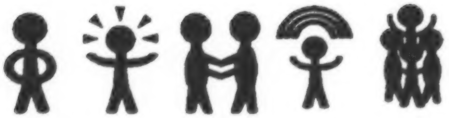
Each chapter of *The Wreckers* ends on its own narrative cliff, creating high interest. The plot follows the teenaged hero as he faces the challenges of saving another ship in distress and freeing his father, the ship's captain, from imprisonment.

New York, NY: Random House
Children's Books, Dell Yearling,
1999
[original 1998]

ISBN 0–440–41545–4

Awards:

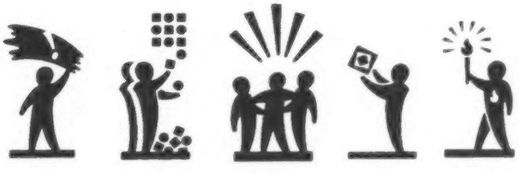
Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, 1999



Grade 8

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



ARTEMIS FOWL

Eoin Colfer

"Artemis's main problem was one of location—how to locate a leprechaun. This was one sly bunch of fairies, hanging around for God knows how many millennia and still not one photo, not one frame of video. Not even a Loch Ness-type hoax. They weren't exactly a sociable group. And they were smart, too. No one had ever got his hands on fairy gold. But no one had ever had access to the book either. And puzzles were so simple when you had the key." p. 63

Artemis Fowl combines fantasy and modern crime adventure into a fast-paced and humorous story. Artemis is a 12-year-old criminal genius who obtains a copy of The Book—a mythical text that reveals all the secrets of The People (elves, fairies and dwarfs who have been forced underground by humans). Holly is a determined fairy creature who is the first female member of Commander Root's LEP (Lower Elements Police) recon patrol. When Holly goes to Ireland to replenish her magic, she encounters Artemis staking out the replenishing site. Despite Holly's incredible personal and technological resources, she becomes his hostage. Artemis demands fairy gold in exchange for her freedom. Commander Root and the LEP locate Holly at Fowl Manor on the outskirts of Dublin. Equipped with an arsenal of time-stops, mind-wipes, blasters, bio-bombs and a terrifying troll, they try to rescue her but Artemis is prepared and waiting for them.

Colfer's ending may be disappointing to some readers, but the journey getting there is hilarious. The subterranean fairy world that Colfer details parallels the world above. The text is packed with witty dialogue, bright and not-so-bright characters, and action sequences that loop one cliffhanger to the next. While the humour and gadgetry may appeal more to boys, girls will enjoy the tough and gritty female fairy, Holly.

New York, NY: Talk Miramax
Books/Hyperion Paperbacks,
2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0–7868–1707–0

THE DARK IS RISING

Susan Cooper

The Dark is Rising is a high-level fantasy read that addresses the cosmic struggle between the forces of light and dark. The story begins when Will Stanton first hears a mysterious, ancient chant on his eleventh birthday. Though he has grown up in a happy, loving family, he now senses there are dark stirrings in the world. Even the animals are afraid of him, and Will sees things that no one else does, such as an olden-days blacksmith shop and a tall stranger who tries to get Will to come up onto his great black horse. Soon he meets Merriman, the first of the Old Ones, who tells him that Will, too, has the power of the Old Ones, an ancient group destined to battle the powers of evil that trouble the land. Will is assigned an enormous task: he must find and protect the six great Signs of the Light, which, when joined, will create a force strong enough to fight that of the Dark.

"'You are the Sign-Seeker, Will Stanton. That is your destiny, your quest. If you can accomplish that, you will have brought to life one of the three great forces that the Old Ones must turn soon towards vanquishing the powers of the Dark, which are reaching out now steadily and stealthily over all this world ... For the Dark, the Dark is rising.'" p. 43

In *The Dark Is Rising,* Cooper draws on rich sources of Celtic and Druidic mythology to create an epic fantasy that is grounded in the very real world of the child: a child's feelings and observations, a child's fear, wonder and surprise. This novel is the second in a series of five books.

New York, NY: Simon &
Schuster Children's
Publishing Division, Aladdin
Paperbacks, 1999
[original 1973]

ISBN 0–689–82983–3

DRAGONWINGS

Laurence Yep

"Some Sundays, though, they would come to visit us and help fly Father's huge models. They were as thrilled at Father's progress as we were. And when we began to actually build the aeroplane, they made a point of coming down with an already fixed cold supper and helping us. But though they called it the aeroplane, or sometimes the flying machine, Father and I always thought of it as Dragonwings." pp. 269–270

Dragonwings is built around the exploits of a fictional character, Windrider, and is presented through the eyes of his son, Moon Shadow, who comes from China to San Francisco at the age of eight to join his father. The America that Moon Shadow finds is no "Land of the Golden Mountain." San Francisco seems a drab and dangerous place where Chinese workers are ridiculed and sometimes attacked by the white populace. When Moon Shadow, now ten years old and helping with the bill collecting, is beaten and robbed, Windrider becomes caught up in a gang war. It is necessary for him to get out of Chinatown, and his skill with machinery and construction lands him a job as a maintenance man for a Polk Street landlady. Miss Whitlaw's niece befriends Moon Shadow and, on a beach outing, the two families are thrilled watching Windrider fly his amazing glider-kite. Windrider has been reading about the Wright brothers' experiments with motorized gliders, and he dreams of building one himself. The dreams and plans of all San Franciscans are interrupted, though, in April 1906, when the city experiences a devastating earthquake.

Yep's novel is a deft weaving of Chinese mythology, details of the Chinese immigrant experience, the famous earthquake disaster, the logistics of building and flying an airplane, and a young boy's own growth as he learns about compassion, perseverance and courage from his father.

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2001
[original 1975]

ISBN 0-06-440085-9

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1976

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Laurence Yep,* 1998
[21 min. BPN 2075909].

FREAK THE MIGHTY

Rodman Philbrick

Freak the Mighty is a poignant tale of two misfits who find the power to overcome their fear of the intolerant outside world. Max, the narrator, is an overgrown eighth-grade kid who is labelled "learning disabled" by his teachers. With his mother dead and his father in prison, Max lives in the basement of his grandparents' house, where he can escape from a friendless world. Everything changes the day Kevin—"Freak"—moves in next door. Freak has a normal-sized head but a body the size of a two-year-old. He gets around on crutches, but is soon riding on Max's shoulders, creating a formidable Arthurian knight. Their imaginary quests form an invincible bond. Freak helps Max get moved from the learning disabled class into an academic class and supports him when his father gets out of jail and goes on a rampage. In the end, Freak gives Max something magical: a blank book for writing down their legend.

Rodman Philbrick portrays both Max and Freak with a skill that makes their vulnerabilities and their triumphs come alive for students. The voice of Max as the narrator is touching and funny. *Freak the Mighty* explores loyalty and friendship within an easy and high-interest read.

"Freak is still holding tight to my shoulders and when they ask him for his name, he says, 'We're Freak the Mighty, that's who we are. We're nine feet tall, in case you haven't noticed.' That's how it started, really, how we got to be Freak the Mighty, slaying dragons and fools and walking high above the world." pp. 39–40

New York, NY: Scholastic
Inc., Scholastic Signature,
2001
[original 1993]

ISBN 0–439–28606–9

THE GIVER

Lois Lowry

"The Giver shrugged. 'Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences.' He thought for a moment. 'We gained control of many things. But we had to let go others.' 'We shouldn't have!' Jonas said fiercely." p. 95

The Giver is a science fiction novel that presents a utopian/dystopian future in which colour, pain and variation have been erased. Conformity, good manners, precise language, and work for the common good are the most highly valued virtues. We discover this world through Jonas, a boy approaching the "Ceremony of Twelve," a coming-of-age ritual in which young people receive life assignments such as birth mothers, caring for the elderly, or nurturers of the young. Jonas finds that his assignment will be something very different: he is to train as the Receiver of Memory under an aging, bearded sage, the only person with access to the history of humankind. Through mental transmission and the laying-on of hands, "the Giver" allows Jonas to experience everything that has been lost to the new society—everything from the colour and warmth of summer sailing and a family gathering at Christmas to the pain of battle and starvation. Jonas begins to realize that while his carefully modulated society avoids the larger tragedies of history, it creates a more subtle kind of horror.

Lowry's 1993 Newbery Medal winner is at once spellbinding and disturbing. Euthanasia, an infant being put to death, and post puberty medication to eliminate sexual urges are all treated with sensitivity and occur only where integral to the plot. These issues may be difficult for some students. Although Jonas' rejection of these norms provides the central conflict, the story's resolution creates an open-ended interpretation that encourages critical thinking and debate.

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2002 [original 1993]

ISBN 0–440–23768–8

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1994

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Lois Lowry*, 2002 [22 min. BPN 2075911].

HOLES

Louis Sachar

In ***Holes***, Stanley Yelnats finds himself plunked down in Camp Green Lake, a work-camp for juvenile delinquents, after being wrongfully accused of theft. Stanley discovers there is no lake, just a gigantic, dry wasteland where daytime temperatures hover around 95 degrees in the shade. All of the boys are sent out each day in the heat to dig holes. The warden, it seems, is convinced that there is buried treasure on the site. When Stanley digs up a tiny cartridge with the initials 'KB' on it, enclosed in the shape of a heart, he's sure he has found a clue.

Stanley learns that one hundred and ten years ago, Katherine Barlow, the schoolteacher, refused an offer of marriage from the son of the richest man in the country. Instead, she fell in love with Sam, a negro. There was a law in Texas forbidding their romance, so the gentle schoolmarm became the notorious outlaw Kissin' Kate Barlow.

Holes subtly addresses the themes of justice and friendship through a humourous, descriptive and accessible style that has wide appeal for students.

> *"One thing was certain: They weren't just digging to build character. They were definitely looking for something. And whatever they were looking for, they were looking in the wrong place. Stanley gazed out across the lake, toward the spot where he had been digging yesterday when he found the gold tube. He dug the hole into his memory." p. 71*

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *All About the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Holes,"* 2002 [21 min. BPN 2076103], *Good Conversation: A Talk with Louis Sachar*, 1999 [21 min. BPN 2075912] and *Holes* (feature film) [120 min. BPN 2079101].

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2001
[original 1998]

ISBN 0-440-22859-X

Awards:

ALA Best Books for Young Adults, 1978

INVITATION TO THE GAME

Monica Hughes

> *"'But why've they done it? Why such an elaborate scheme just to entertain us? I think there's more to The Game than meets the eye. Even now we know how it's done, we still don't know why.'"*
> *p. 93*

Invitation to the Game is set in a 2154 dystopia where machines and robots do all the work, and humans are forced to live on welfare or become colonists. Sixteen-year-old Lisse and her friends live in an abandoned warehouse provided to them by the government. Anxious to escape their dreary lives, the friends brave their Designated Area's nightlife, shunning drugs and easy pleasures to seek out an invitation to the mysterious "Game" they have heard about. When they finally get an invitation, they discover the game is an amazing adventure that allows them to escape their reality. It seems like paradise, but they cannot help but wonder what the point of it is. Eventually the friends finish the game and as a reward are transported to Prize, another planet; however, the author leaves us wondering if the youths have gone to a real paradise or if it is, in fact, just an illusion.

Toronto, ON: HarperCollins
Publishers Ltd., 1992
[original 1990]

ISBN 0–00–647414–4

Awards:

CLA Notable, 1991

JOURNEY TO THE RIVER SEA

Eva Ibbotson

Journey to the River Sea follows Maia, an orphan, as she travels to Manaus, Brazil to live with relatives. On the voyage across the Atlantic, Maia befriends Clovis King, teenage member of an acting troupe who is fretting over the fact that he is outgrowing the child roles he was hired to play.

The dreams Maia has of the exotic life she will lead at the Carters' rubber plantation come crashing down when she finds herself suddenly in Brazil with a family determined to live, dress and eat as if they were in Britain. The spoiled twin daughters make it a project to see how miserable they can make things for their new foster sister. In desperation, Maia heads into the city by boat on her own. The journey begins with her becoming lost but ends with her meeting a mysterious boy of the river. Their paths are destined to cross again soon, and when Clovis shows up, his life too will become intertwined with theirs.

The novel uses very descriptive passages at an average reading level to demonstrate cultural diversity in this humourous adventure.

> *"Clovis had come up the river in an old tramp steamer which carried anything from cattle to timber. He had paid the last of his money to the captain, who had allowed him to crouch on deck between a crate of bleating nanny goats and a leaking sack of maize. But he wouldn't put Clovis off at the Carters' landing stage. 'Bad place,' he said."*
> *p. 109*

London, England: Macmillan
Publishers Limited, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0-330-39715-X

KENSUKE'S KINGDOM

Michael Morpurgo

"He was right. We were happy, and I was his family. But I had another family too. I thought of the last time I had been out in a boat, of my mother and my father and how they must be grieving for me every day, every night. By now they must surely believe I was drowned, that there was no chance I could be alive. But I wasn't drowned. I was alive. Somehow I had to let them know it."
pp. 126–127

Kensuke's Kingdom is a survival story that begins in England when 11-year-old Michael's parents decide to buy a small second-hand yacht. After fixing and outfitting the *Peggy Sue* and learning how to navigate, they become sailors in the south seas. Michael is thrilled with their travels. Then disaster strikes. One night, Michael goes to retrieve his dog when a sudden gust of wind rocks the boat and the two fall overboard. After what seems like hours someone helps him into a boat. He regains consciousness on a beach of a small island, seemingly alone with his dog. Michael can find no water and no edible vegetation. Parched and hungry, he finally falls asleep.

With morning, Michael discovers someone has left a bowl of water and some strips of fish. His benefactor does not reveal himself until Michael starts a small fire on the beach. Suddenly a small, enraged man emerges and hastily extinguishes the fire. He is Kensuke, a Japanese man, and in time, Michael will come to know Kensuke's story: how he survived a naval battle at the end of World War II, how he hid from American marines and how he heard them talk of the destruction of Nagasaki where his family lived. Fond as Michael becomes of Kensuke, he longs for his parents and searches for a way to get back to them without betraying the Japanese man's whereabouts. Morpurgo's spare text and Michael Foreman's pen sketches make this a very accessible novel for below grade level readers.

London, England: Egmont
Children's Books Limited,
Mammoth, 2000
[original 1999]

ISBN 0-7497-3639-9

Awards:

Winner of the Children's Book Award, 1999

LOOKING BACK: A BOOK OF MEMORIES

Lois Lowry

"Looking back at the child I was, I smile. She was right to be wary. There were going to be a lot of pitfalls ahead, for her. But I know, too, that her serious, suspicious gaze was momentary. Most of the time the little girl was laughing." p. 19

Looking Back is Lois Lowry's generous and richly-illustrated response to her readers' interest in how fiction is shaped from the events of a life. The memoir has a general chronological movement to it; however, much of the material is arranged thematically. For example, a photo of Lowry as a one-day-old baby in 1937 is followed by very similar pictures of her grandchildren in 1983 and 1993. Other clusters explore the relationships of siblings. Along with humour and nostalgia, we find Lowry writing through the grief of losing her older sister to cancer, and later the heartbreaking loss of her own son in a flying accident.

For readers familiar with Lowry's work, it is easy to match the author's reminiscences of her childhood exploits with those of the irrepressible Anastasia Krupnik, one of the characters she created. Each chapter in the memoir opens with a brief quote from Lowry's published works, and through the photographs and anecdotes, we gradually learn how her experiences influenced all her novels, including award-winning titles such as *Number the Stars* and *The Giver*, included in the Grade 4 and Grade 8 lists, respectively.

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Lois Lowry, 2002.* [22 min. BPN 2075911].

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Books,
Delacorte Press, 2000
[original 1998]

ISBN 0–385–32699–8

THE MASTER PUPPETEER

Katherine Paterson

"He reached up to untie the puppet ... He felt instead something quite hard. He put his fingers around it. It was smooth and shaped like a slightly flattened pipe. With a sort of mild curiosity he pulled it down off the rafter to have a look. To his surprise he found that he was grasping a sheathed samurai sword." p. 125

The Master Puppeteer is a 'Robin-Hood' story set in feudal Japan. For five years, the country has been in the grips of famine, with the shogun blaming his government ministers, the ministers blaming the rice merchants, the merchants blaming the farm landlords, and the landlords blaming the peasantry. The peasants have only the gods to blame. The only beacon in this bleak landscape is Saburo, a bandit king who uses surprise and trickery to steal food and riches from wealthy merchants that he distributes to the poor and hungry. The story follows Jiro, the 13-year-old son of a puppet-maker, who is apprenticed to the harsh, ill-tempered Yoshido, master of the most famous puppet theatre in Japan. When Jiro finds a sheathed samurai sword in Yoshido's closet, he wonders if there is a connection between his master and Saburo, the bandit king.

While this easy reading novel focuses on the likeable male protagonist, Japanese culture is woven into the tapestry of the story. Paterson, who lived in Japan for four years, revisited the country to do research on Banraku puppet theatre for the novel.

New York, NY:
HarperTrophy, 1989
[original 1975]

ISBN 0–06–440281–9

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Katherine Paterson,* 1999. [21 min. BPN 2075908].

REDWORK

Michael Bedard

Redwork explores the relationship that develops between Cass, a resourceful and sensitive young protagonist, and Mr. Magnus, his mysterious landlord. Cass has just moved to yet another run-down apartment with his mother, who is trying to work days as a cleaning lady while finishing a doctoral thesis on William Blake. To make ends meet, his mother needs Cass to take an usher job at the movie theatre. There he meets Maddy, and together they face neighbourhood bullies and delve into the world of alchemy with Mr. Magnus. Mr. Magnus is an eccentric man who practises the strange arts of alchemy that were passed on to him by a friend that he lost in the Great War. Despite the local rumours and Mr. Magnus's eccentric mannerisms, Cass and Mr. Magnus become both friends and co-workers in the tasks of alchemy.

> *"There was a sudden glint of gold on the frail hand as the ringed finger caught the light. And for one impossible instant the scene was overlaid with the image of an aging alchemist tending his sacred fire, trying desperately to coax magic from the mud. Could the old man actually believe such things were possible?" p. 192*

Michael Bedard explores the relationships between teens, and with seniors, while maintaining an easy level of reading for wide appeal.

Toronto, ON: Stoddart
Publishing Co. Limited, 2001
[original 1990]

ISBN 0–7737–3332–9

THE SEEING STONE

Kevin Crossley-Holland

"'So, Arthur,' says the hooded man in his deep voice, 'what will your quest be?' Then the hooded man and the knight take Arthur by the left arm and the right, and raise him to his feet. They bow to him, and give him the reins of the riderless horse. Then they mount their own horses and ride away, deeper into the forest. Arthur is alone. He turns around, very slowly, and I recognize him. I am Arthur: Arthur-in-the-stone is me." p. 155

The Seeing Stone is an historical fantasy that melds the story of Arthur, a foster child in a nobleman's home in 1199, with the story of the legendary King Arthur. Arthur is a sensitive thirteen-year-old boy who longs to be a knight but also likes to write poetry. He bemoans the fact that he lacks the skills for becoming a squire like his brother Serle, and he raises his father's hackles by too readily helping peasants such as his friend, Gatty, the reeve's daughter. When Merlin gives the boy of the twelfth century a magical stone, it reveals the future King Arthur as a boy like himself, on the threshold of manhood in a time, like his own, when the knights of the realm are in turmoil over who shall succeed to the crown.

Kevin Crossley-Holland presents this lengthy story from the point of view of Arthur in one hundred short chapters. The text captures details of day-to-day life in a great manor of the twelfth century, including accounts of special occasions such as Halloween and Yuletide. Teachers will want to discuss the treatment of women in the context of medieval times. Throughout, pages are decorated with woodcuts in the style of early manuscript motifs. *The Seeing Stone* is the first novel in a projected trilogy.

London, England: Orion
Paperbacks, 2001
[original 2000]

ISBN 0–75284–429–6

SHADOW IN HAWTHORN BAY

Janet Lunn

🍁

Shadow in Hawthorn Bay is the story of a Scottish girl who leaves her Highland home for Upper Canada in 1815 to seek her cousin and childhood friend, Duncan, who she believes has called to her in distress. Although it can be a handicap more than a blessing, Mary Urqhart has the "gift" of second sight. She can see into the past, future, distance, and even into the hearts of others. Mary makes the difficult ocean voyage to Hawthorn Bay on Lake Ontario. She arrives to find that her cousin has died and her aunt and uncle have moved on.

> *"'What kind of country is it?' she demanded. 'Is there none among them who has the two sights? Is it only the Indians who have the gift of healing?—who speak the charms against ill-wishing here? Och, how could there be fairies in this flat, tree-covered place?'"*
> *p. 157*

Instead of returning home, she finds a place with the friendly Colliver family. Mary also agrees to go and help with Luke Anderson's ailing sister. Although she cannot save the baby in the squalid Andersen homestead, Mary finds she has healing capabilities, something she can build a new life on. She continues to learn from Owena, an Indian healer. There is also a growing place for Luke in her life. Eventually, Mary comes to accept her new life, to give up the ties of a dead love, and to relinquish the Gaelic spirits that seem to be misplaced in this new world.

Janet Lunn weaves together very descriptive passages and a strong female protagonist to address issues of tradition, values and responsibility in this more challenging read.

Toronto, ON: Random
House of Canada Limited,
Seal Books, 2001
[original 1986]

ISBN 0-7704-2886-X

Awards:

Canada Council Children's Literature Prize, 1986

SHANE

Jack Schaefer

"'I like him.' Mother's voice was serious. 'He's so nice and polite and sort of gentle. Not like most men I've met out here. But there's something about him. Something underneath the gentleness ... Something ...' Her voice trailed away. 'Mysterious?' suggested father. 'Yes, of course. Mysterious. But more than that. Dangerous.'" p. 10

Shane embodies the elements of a classic western through the fresh and innocent eyes of a child.

When the mysterious stranger, Shane, rides up to the Starrett's small homestead, Bobby is mesmerized. Joe and Marian Starrett are drawn, as well, to this man who manages to have entire conversations without really telling anyone anything about himself. Shane stops for a drink of water, but ends up staying on as the Starrett's hired man. It is not long before he is caught up in an ongoing feud between the homesteaders and Fletcher, a cattle baron determined to keep the range open. When Fletcher's men bait him at the saloon in town, they discover that Shane will tolerate their insults only to a point. After Shane knocks down a couple of the ranch hands, Fletcher decides to hire a gunman.

Schaefer's novel sensitively tells the story of a boy's growing up. Bobby becomes aware of the desperate loneliness of a man who cannot shake his past, and he takes to heart Shane's words that encourage him to live and grow strong in the caring, loving heart of his family.

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Books,
Bantam Books, 1975
[original 1949]

ISBN 0–553–27110–5

SHIPWRECKED! THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF A JAPANESE BOY

Rhoda Blumberg

Shipwrecked! The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy chronicles the amazing true story of Manjiro (later renamed John Mung), the first Japanese to set foot in America. Manjiro was a lowly fishing boy in 1836 who gained a position with the crew of a small fishing vessel only to be swept far out to sea by a storm. The crew managed to land on a tiny island where they survived for five months before American sailors from a whaling ship finally discovered them. However, Japan's isolationist policy at the time forbid foreign ships access to the country and stated that any person leaving the country and returning later would be put to death.

Captain Whitfield found a safe haven for the Japanese men in Hawaii, but took the eager Manjiro with him back to New England. For three years he worked on a sailing ship where the crew eventually mutinied against its insane captain. Manjiro then panned for gold during the California gold rush, earning enough to buy a whaling boat and return to Japan with three others of the castaways. When the four arrived, they were immediately imprisoned, but following the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1854 and the end of Japan's isolationism, Manjiro rose to be a samurai and ambassador.

The account is interspersed with a wealth of archival photographs and graphics, as well as whaling prints, whimsical Japanese illustrations and sketches by John Mung himself.

> *"Manjiro dreamed of digging enough treasure to finance his return to Japan. He was tormented by a vision of his mother begging for food. He had not seen her for nearly ten years. Although aware that he could be imprisoned and killed for the sin of visiting a foreign country, he would risk death for peace of mind."* p. 53

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Children's Books, HarperTrophy, 2003 [original 2001]

ISBN 0-688-17485-X

Awards:

New York Public Library's "One hundred titles for Reading and Sharing", 2003

Judy Lopez Memorial Award, 2001

ALA Notable Children's Book, 2001

A SINGLE SHARD

Linda Sue Park

"Holding the pouch clear of the boulders with one hand, he climbed back to the path. His every movement was quick with purpose; to hesitate was to doubt. He had made up his mind: he would journey on to Songdo and show the emissary the single shard." p. 130

A Single Shard portrays the loyalty and courage of a young potter's apprentice in a small Korean village in the 12th century. For years, Tree-ear, an orphan, has lived without a home. While scavenging meals for his friend and protector, Crane-man, Tree-ear discovers the master potter, Min, plying his craft. Of all the ceramics in Ch'ulp'o, Min's reveal the finest craftsmanship and showcase the exquisite grey-green colour of celadon. Tree-ear cannot help but dream of one day becoming such a craftsman himself.

When he is startled and drops a box that Min has set out to dry, Tree-ear makes a deal to work for nine days to pay for the damage. It is grueling labour, but when the term is over Tree-ear offers to continue working for the old potter. Gradually, he learns the painstaking skills. Because a potter will only pass on the skills of the wheel to a son, Min refuses to let Tree-ear further his skills even though Min's son died many years ago. Tree-ear thinks if he can make the long journey to Songdo, to show Min's vases and seek a commission from the royal household, he may yet win Min's favour.

Linda Sue Park's extensive research into an ancient art is woven seamlessly into this story of a boy's growth as he takes on responsibilities beyond his years. In examining Korean society of the period, Park presents a culture in which the humanism of the Buddhist and Confucian traditions were strong features.

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Books,
Dell Yearling, 2003
[original 2001]

ISBN 0–440–41851–8

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Linda Sue Park*, 2002 [21 min. BPN 2075910].

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE

Avi

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle tells a tale of adventure and mutiny on the high seas. When her father's business recalls him to America, Charlotte remains to finish her term at the Barrington School for Better Girls in England and then boards a brig, *The Seahawk,* for the ocean voyage home. Once aboard, Charlotte finds that the families that were to accompany her are not there; she is not only the sole child but also the sole female aboard. When the grizzled black cook offers to be her friend and presents her with the gift of a knife, Charlotte's sense of uneasiness grows. To occupy her time, she records each day's events in a journal her father gave her as a going-away gift.

Compared to the rag-tag sailing crew, Captain Jaggery's air of refinement and authority provides her with a feeling of comfort, but when she sees the punishment of a stowaway turn into murder, she realizes that her allegiance has been misplaced. Taking off her ladies' apparel, she dons the clothing of a sailor and tells the crew she has decided to join them.

Suspenseful and inviting, this novel explores the society-driven stereotypes and limiting class structure during colonial times. An unexpected ending, in which young Charlotte is forced to make a choice, reinforces the strength and hope this female protagonist exhibits.

> *"You will understand that there was no doubt in my mind regarding what I had seen. There had been a pistol. There had been a round robin. With the warnings given to me by Captain Jaggery—and ever mindful of the possibilities revealed to me by Zachariah—I had little doubt about the meaning of my discoveries. The crew was preparing a rebellion." p. 81*

New York, NY: Avon Books,
Inc., Avon Camelot, 1997
[original 1990]

ISBN 0-380-72885-0

Awards:

A School Library Journal Best Book of 1990

ALA Notable Book, 1990

THE TUESDAY CAFE

Don Trembath

The Tuesday Cafe is a warmly-humorous coming-of-age story about a troubled teenager who learns about himself and connects with others through an unlikely writing group. The novel begins with Harper Winslow being sentenced to forty hours of community service and a 2,000-word essay about "How I Plan to Turn My Life Around" after setting a fire in his high school. To help him with his essay, he is enrolled in The Tuesday Café, a writing group that Harper soon discovers is geared towards adults with special needs. For example, there is short, stout Patty, who likes to poke people in the back, and Lou, with shaggy grey hair who dropped out of school in Grade 4 and does not talk to anyone.

In Harper, Alberta writer, Don Trembath, offers the kind of wise-cracking teenage cynic who appeals to teens in general. Harper is convinced the class is going to be useless, and thinks their first writing assignment—"My Sunday"—is a dumb idea. But when he finally manages to get something written down and reads it out, he realizes that it has touched all of them. He decides to come back, and as he gets to know and care about his unusual classmates at The Tuesday Cafe, Harper begins to see his own problems in perspective.

> *"... at the end of class, Josh came up and said, 'See, you sure got them interested ... That's good writing.' I didn't know whether I should believe him or not, but when Mom came and asked if I wanted to come back next week, I said sure. Why not? I'd spent two hours in a classroom and I didn't look at the clock even once."*
> *p. 56*

Victoria, BC: Orca Book
Publishers, 1996

ISBN 1-55143-074-6

UNDER THE BLOOD-RED SUN

Graham Salisbury

Under the Blood-Red Sun is a story about the prejudice experienced by a Japanese–American family in Hawaii during the attack on Pearl Harbour. Tomi Nakaji and his little sister, Kimi, were born in Hawaii, but their parents were born in Japan. When their grandfather, Joji, comes from Japan to live with the family and displays a Japanese flag in their yard, the family's Japanese heritage stands out even more.

Tomi's best friend, Billy, a haole (white boy), shares a love of baseball and dogs. Tomi and Billy are out for baseball practice one morning when the sky is suddenly filled with low-flying aircraft. Within minutes, they hear explosions and gunfire and see black smoke rising from the navy yards at Pearl Harbour in the distance. Immediately, Tomi's life is changed as his family struggles to survive in the face of numerous calamities. Mr. Nakaji is arrested in a roundup of Japanese men, and his boat is scuttled. A vengeful neighbour boy draws attention to the family's cages of racing pigeons, and Grampa's old Japanese sword. Tomi and Grampa are forced to slaughter the birds, and soon Joji is among those arrested and sent to camps on the mainland. Tomi's mother, a housemaid, loses her job.

Salisbury's depiction of a teen caught in the chaos following the infamous attack on Pearl Harbour is vivid, compelling reading. The story deals with themes of cultural differences, racism and war within a historical context. Teachers may wish to relate Tomi's story to the experiences of Japanese–Canadians at that time.

> *"By noon, everything we had that had anything to do with Japan was spread out over the kitchen table—Mama's beautiful traditional kimono; a bundle of letters tied together with white ribbon; a photograph of me when I was younger, standing in the front row of my language class with a Japanese flag in the background ... 'Bury it,' Mama finally said, her eyes glistening." p. 137*

New York, NY: Random
House Children's Books, Dell
Yearling, 1995
[original 1994]

ISBN 0–440–41139–4

Awards:

Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, 1995

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 1995

WALK TWO MOONS

Sharon Creech

"We walked out onto her porch and there, lying on the top step, was a white envelope ... Phoebe picked it up and opened it. 'Gosh,' she said. Inside was a small piece of blue paper and on it was printed this message: Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins. 'What an odd thing,' Phoebe said." pp. 44–45

Walk Two Moons is a funny, bittersweet story about two 13-year-old girls whose mothers have disappeared. Salamanca Tree Hiddle is retracing her mother's final steps on a car trip from Ohio to Idaho. Her free-spirited grandparents are driving and request a story to pass the time. The story comes to us through Sal's voice as she fills the hours and days of the trip with an account of her and her best friend, Phoebe Winterbottom. Like Sal, Phoebe's mother left the family suddenly. Phoebe is convinced the strange young man who appeared on the Winterbottom's doorstep a while back has kidnapped her mother, especially when she begins receiving secret, cryptic messages on her doorstep. The two girls try to unravel the mystery.

Sal tells Phoebe's story with a humorous tone and rich backwoods flavour. She is also candid about the rebellion the last year has raised within her. In telling the story to her grandparents, Sal figures out some important things about her own life. At journey's end, she is finally able to accept what happened to her mother and close a puzzling and painful chapter in her life.

London, England: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001 [original 1994]

ISBN 0–330–39783–4

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1995

Hartland Award for Excellence in Youth Adult Literature, 1995

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW

Anita Horrocks

What They Don't Know is a dramatic story about a 14-year-old girl named Hannah trying to deal with the sudden discovery that the man who raised her is not her biological father. This discovery, however, is not revealed to the readers immediately. Instead, the story is narrated by Kelly, Hannah's 17-year-old sister, who is trying to uncover the reason for Hannah's increasing depression and misbehaviour by going through her sister's secret box, filled with stories, notes and school documents. These documents are presented at the beginning of each chapter. Kelly's voice provides balance and realism, as we watch Hannah spinning out of control and getting involved in alcohol, drugs and crime. Eventually Kelly learns the truth, and helps her sister back from the brink of disaster.

> *"In Hannah's box of secrets I found a battered and torn poster from her science fair project last February. I found a lot of things, but the poster reminds me it was at the science fair that Hannah's story, which began who knows when, first screamed to be heard."* p. 5

The context of the story is both familiar and convincing: the girls' parents are divorced, their mom is pursuing a career, and their dad is about to remarry. Horrocks provides a glimpse of the dark alleys that wait for teens determined to find them, and creates high interest with a family almost brought to ruin. *What They Don't Know* uses the intricacies of narrative in prose that is graceful, poetic and spare when it needs to be.

Toronto, ON: Stoddart Kids, 1998

ISBN 0-7737-6001-6

Awards:

Alberta Book Award for Children's Literature, 1999

WINNERS

Mary-Ellen Lang Collura

> *"Everything was clear now and the world was brand new. His father was a star. His mother was a winner. He had been a rodeo man. She had been beautiful. Imagine if they had lived, where he'd be now. He would be the junior rodeo champion of North America. Everyone would know who he was. He would be a rider above the walkers. A winner." p. 16*

Winners is set in southern Alberta on the Ash Creek Reserve. Fifteen-year-old Jordy Threebears has already lived in eleven foster homes; now he is sent to live with Joe Speckledhawk, a grandfather who has been released from prison for manslaughter. Joe is a taciturn, introspective old man, but Jordy does not mind being left alone. He attends Grade 9 in the small town high school. Slowly, with the help of the community and Mr. Campbell, his social worker, he pieces together the history of his deceased parents.

When his grandfather gives Jordy a horse as a Christmas gift, both Jordy and Joe begin opening up to one another. Miss MacTavish, one of Jordy's teachers, offers to give him tips on riding if he will spend some time with another pupil, Emily MacKenzie, a blind girl who loves to ride but requires a riding companion. Jordy revels in having his own horse and being with Emily. Complication is introduced with the sudden disappearance of Jordy's horse. Jordy cannot help thinking that one of the ranch hands is involved.

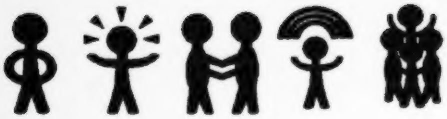
When Jordy finally gets his horse back, he trains for and participates in a one hundred mile endurance race in the foothills. The whole community rallies in preparation for the race. In detailing Jordy's education, Collura brings out a number of acculturation issues but also underlines the fact that winning lies within the heart of the individual. Some coarse language is used to develop characters.

Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books, 1993
[original 1984]

ISBN 1–55054–223–0

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Award, 1985



Grade 9

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List

AFTER THE WAR

Carol Matas

> *"There are about fifty other kids our age there, who have obviously been at the camp for awhile. We are told that it will be our job to help make the children better. (And who will make us better, I wonder?)" p. 62*

After the War looks at what happened to the young people who, against all odds, survived the Holocaust. The story follows Ruth Mendenberg as she returns to her uncle's house in Ostroviec, Poland, the last place where her family was together before being sent to the death camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald. After an unfriendly former servant tells her that none of her family has returned, Ruth joins a group to escape from Poland through Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy, and then by water to Palestine. The 15-year-old lies about her age saying she is seventeen and is put in charge of a group of children, some nearly her own age.

The personal story of Ruth and her family unfolds in brief flashbacks. At the same time, Ruth's story reflects that of many of the 69 000 Jews who managed to get to Palestine illegally between the time the end of World War II in 1945 and May 1948. The journey is filled with continued persecution, suspenseful border crossings, narrow escapes, and finally the crossing by boat to Palestine. Ruth finds herself growing to care about the children in her group, as well as Zvi, a boy with whom she forms a special relationship.

Winnipeg writer Carol Matas has written a number of powerful historical novels that articulate the Jewish Holocaust experience. *After the War* shows how a group, almost beyond weariness and care, can slowly forge on, spurred by the determination to find a home for their people.

Markham, ON: Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1994

ISBN 0–590–12384–X

Awards:

American Library Association Best Book of the Year Award, 1996

AK

Peter Dickinson

"At once the dream-world was forgotten and he knew exactly who he was. Paul. Warrior. of the Fifth Special Commando of the Nagala Liberation Army. now out on a mission to blow up and ambush the Grand Trunk Railway between Dangoum and Jomjom. Who he was. what he was. all he was. Paul. Warrior. A boy with his own guns." p. 5

AK depicts the horrible story of child warriors in Africa. Paul was a homeless orphan boy when guerilla soldiers found him wandering in the bush. The soldiers taught him to carry a gun, an old AK, and become a "Warrior"—someone to prepare meals for a soldier "uncle," serve as a sentry or act as a decoy in ambushes. When the war ends, Paul's uncle, Michael, declares that the boy is to be his adopted son. It will be Paul's job to get an education, learn English and study the country's dominant cultures. All arms are to be turned in to the government, but Paul buries his AK in a secret place.

Paul is learning the Fulu language in a settlement away from Dangoum, the capital city, when word comes that there has been a coup. Along with a couple of the other boy Warriors and Jilli, the young girl teaching him Fulu, Paul strikes out for Dangoum where he is certain his uncle's life is in danger. It is a route that will take him past the spot where the AK is buried, and Paul knows the time has come to dig it up.

Written at an average reading level with graphic depictions of war, the story presents two possible results of the violence—one showing a positive direction; one locked into the bleak recurrence of strife and warfare—and challenges the citizens of today to effect a change for the better.

London, England: Macmillan
Children's Books, 2001
[original 1990]

ISBN 0–330–48204–1

ALONE AT NINETY FOOT

Katherine Holubitsky

> *"I want this sadness that's been part of me since she died to go away. It's like this mean little animal deep inside me. Munching at my guts. Feeding on me day after day after day after day. Once in a while taking a great vicious chomp. It hurts so much sometimes, it's just about more than I can take."* p. 51

Alone at Ninety Foot is a funny, powerful story about a 14-year-old girl trying to deal with her mother's suicide. A year ago, Pam's mother ended her life by jumping from a suspension bridge at Vancouver's Lynn Gorge. Now, Pam goes to an isolated spot at the bottom of the gorge to cope with her loss, as well as the normal confusion and self-doubt she feels in her life. She would like to get through the next while without anything creating a stir, at school or at home, but it is not that easy. She has to deal with friends, teachers, her father's awkward new girlfriend, and Matt, a new boy at school who does not seem to recognize the defenses she has built around herself.

Many teenage students will recognize and relate to Pam. Her journal entries are often self-deprecating, filled with the kind of doubts that come from the physical and emotional changes that are happening to her. However, her voice also conveys humour, irony, and a growing sense of her own strength and individuality.

Victoria, BC: Orca Book
Publishers, 2001

ISBN 1–55143–204–8

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Book of the Year, 1999

BLOOD RED OCHRE

Kevin Major

"A sound like thunder cracks the air! ... It is the sound of a whiteman's gun! I paddle as fast as ever I can away from it and out to the sea. I must get to the island. I must not lose my life. Not for me, for my people. I paddle with every bit of strength I have, harder and harder." p. 114

Blood Red Ochre combines two plot lines: the historical story of two Beothuk Indians in the 19th century and the contemporary story of two teens. Fifteen-year-old David has just discovered that the man he believed to be his dad is, in fact, a stepdad. His edginess now makes him ashamed that his mother has been so nice to him. Thankfully, there is a new girl in class: dark-haired, quiet Nancy with her resourceful and intriguing ways. When David picks the Beothuk Indians for a social studies project, he finds out that Nancy has chosen the same topic, and she even suggests an excursion to Red Ochre, a small island off the coast of Newfoundland where archaeologists discovered the skeleton of a single Beothuk Indian.

Simultaneously, the story of Dauoodaset, a young Beothuk, is revealed. It has been a troubling spring, for Dauoodaset. His band, already decimated by the violence and diseases of the white men, has faced a harsh winter with little food. Dauoodaset decides to make a trip by canoe to the seacoast to replenish their food supplies. It will be an arduous journey with many dangers, but he is sustained by the knowledge that Shanawdithit, a girl from another Beothuk encampment, will become his wife.

The two stories come together in a dramatic confrontation between past and present on Red Ochre Island. The dual narratives provide an opportunity to explore the effective use of point of view.

The history of the Beothuk is one of the darkest chapters in colonial exploitation, with an entire Indian Nation dying out because of disease and murder. Historical white men are portrayed negatively in what may be a challenging read for some students.

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada Limited, Seal
Books, 1996
[original 1984]

ISBN 0-7704-2717-0

THE EAR, THE EYE AND THE ARM

Nancy Farmer

> *"Out over the vlei came a distant cry. They couldn't hear the words yet, but Tendai knew what they said. 'Run!' he shouted. They stumbled on. The cry approached them, speeding under the earth, echoing out of the mine shafts ... The She Elephant's commands burst out of the ground. Bits of the hills began to detach and creep after them. 'Find children! Bring them to meeee!'"* p. 95

The Ear, the Eye and the Arm, which takes place in futuristic Zimbabwe, is named after three sleuths who possess special abilities. Arm has an electrical sensitivity in his hands, Ear has extraordinary hearing ability, and Eye has amazing eyesight. It is 2194 and the trio has been hired to track down General Matsika's children, who left their privileged, automated compound for an adventure and were kidnapped in the market. The sleuths learn that the children have been carried through a vast wasteland, Dead Man's Vlei, and are to be slaves in a terrifying underworld.

Nancy Farmer's book is a fast-paced and challenging science fiction adventure. The world it depicts combines some fascinating aspects of a possible future with many of the societal and political problems we associate with the world today. The story contains references to witchcraft and sacrifice; teachers should be prepared to discuss these topics in class.

New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Books Inc., Firebird, 2002
[original 1994]

ISBN 0-14-131109-6

Awards:

Newbery Honor Book, 1995

ENDER'S GAME

Orson Scott Card

Ender's Game is a science fiction novel where students in a special Battle School engage in war "games" and video games in training to fight an alien race known as the "buggers." The world has won a series of battles with the buggers, but there is always the likelihood of their resurgence. Andrew Wiggin, called Ender, is a "third"— an additional child allowed to a family through a government waiver. The government has been monitoring Ender with an implant. With its removal, the six-year-old erupts into violence when confronted with a class bully. This behaviour is noted and he is seen to be a candidate for leadership training and he is invited to Battle School.

"As Ender left the room, he heard somebody say, 'It's Wiggin. You know, that smartass Launchie from the game room. 'He walked down the corridor smiling. He may be short, but they knew his name. From the game room, of course, so it meant nothing. But they'd see. He'd be a good soldier, too. They'd all know his name soon enough." p. 81

At Battle School, children are trained to take the place of the leader who brought them through the last war. Ender is the brightest, outwitting those who are older and have been at the school longer. Ender's video game is a fairy tale where he gets "killed" over and over again until he steps outside the rules and tries tactics no one else might think of. The military government has its eye on Ender's sister, Valentine, and considers how she might be manipulated to achieve the other desired characteristics of a perfect commander.

This is a challenging read with questionable language, violence and a negative portrayal of adults. Orson Scott Card developed this speculative fiction around the question of how military training in the future might be carried out, focusing on the question of whether the ends justify the means. While ultimately optimistic about the human condition, Card's dark, edgy novel suggests that military training has always included some brainwashing and that great leadership requires creativity, spontaneity and adaptation to new circumstances.

New York, NY: Thomas
Doherty Associates, LLC,
Starscape Books, 2002
[original 1977]

ISBN 0-765-3422[illegible]-4

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Philip Pullman

"The consul turned to Farder Coram and said: 'Do you realize who this child is? ... The witches have talked about this child for centuries past,' said the consul. 'Because they live so close to the place where the veil between the worlds is thin, they hear immortal whispers from time to time, in the voices of those beings who pass between the worlds. And they have spoken of a child such as this, who has a great destiny that can only be fulfilled elsewhere—not in this world, but far beyond. Without this child, we shall all die.'" p. 154

The Golden Compass is an elaborate, high-level fantasy that follows Lyra Belacqua, a precocious 11-year-old orphan who has been left by her uncle, Lord Asriel, to be raised by the instructors of Jordan College in Oxford. Her studies focus on the interconnections of science, theology and magic, but Lyra refuses to be confined by courses and becomes more interested in the discoveries on the streets and alleys of Oxford. Lyra is puzzled by sinister and mysterious happenings at the College: she observes an attempt to poison Lord Asriel and listens to discussions of "dust" and a barely-visible city suspended in the aurora borealis.

After Lyra's friend, Roger, is one of many children kidnapped by "Gobblers," Lyra realizes that Mrs. Coulter, her London benefactress, has been using her to lure children to a fate that is difficult to imagine. Lyra takes it upon herself to find out what has happened to Roger and the other children, and rescue her now imprisoned uncle. It is a mission that takes her to the far north where she finds allies ranging from "gyptians" to witches and even an armour-clad polar bear.

Pullman's story deals with demons and witches, but the focus is more on fantasy than on the occult. The novel is filled with unique touches and exacting detail that brings fantasy to life. For example, each person (and each witch) has a personal daemon—a manifestation of the soul in animal form, which can shift forms according to the mental state of its master.

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, Del Rey, 1997
[original 1995]

ISBN 0–345–41335–0

HOMELESS BIRD

Gloria Whelan

Homeless Bird is an easy read about the plight of young widows in India. The story follows Koly, a 13-year-old girl who must take a husband. Money set aside for her education is now for her dowry, and Koly learns the skills of a master embroiderer rather than reading and writing. A betrothal is finalized when the family sells their valued possessions, and Koly moves in with her in-laws.

It is immediately apparent that her teenage husband, Hari, is terribly ill, and Koly realizes that the family has acquired her dowry money in order to take him to Varanasi where he can bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. But the trip only serves to hasten Hari's death, and Koly finds she is an unwanted widow with a sass (a mother-in-law) who despises her. However, Hari's sister Chandra is friendly, and Hari's father (her sassur) agrees to teach her how to read. In the next few years, Chandra marries and then Hari's father dies. Her sass persuades Koly, now seventeen, to go with her to Delhi, and intentionally abandons her in Vrindavan, a city of four thousand temples and a multitude of widows. Destitute, Koly is helped by Raji, a young rickshaw driver who puts her in touch with Maa Kamala, who runs a charity organization that helps abandoned widows.

The story takes on a difficult social issue while portraying the individual growth of a teenage girl. Koly's spirit grows as she rebuilds her life using her skillful, creative fingers and quick mind. Eventually, she even finds love with a young man who cherishes her.

> *"Whatever my sassur had said, I knew Sass would never think of me as a daughter. I was nothing now. I could not go back to my parents and be a daughter again. I was no longer a wife or a bahus, a daughter-in-law. Yes, I thought, I am something. I am a widow. And I began to sob."* pp. 45–46

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2001
[original 2000]

ISBN 0–06–440819–1

Awards:

National Book Award, 1993

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 1993

THE MAESTRO

Tim Wynne-Jones

> *"'Please, don't call me sir. Call me Baron, if you like. No, I don't feel like a baron any more. Nathaniel. Better still, call me Maestro. Yes, I like that. What do you think?' 'Maestro,' said Burl. 'That's like a conductor?' 'Oh, more than just a conductor. Master. Teacher. Here, I'll teach you something. Then you'll have to call me Maestro.'"*
> *p. 54*

The Maestro focuses on the unlikely friendship that forms between a teen runaway from the Ontario backwoods and a reclusive middle-aged musical genius. For years, 14-year-old Burl Crow has tried to make himself invisible around his physically abusive dad. All of his hopes and dreams are secrets. When Burl is caught spying on his father and a waitress, he must run into the forest to escape his father's violent temper. In the Northern Ontario wilderness, he finds an old cabin to hole up in. The next day brings rain, hordes of mosquitoes and gnawing hunger. Then in the middle of the wilderness, Burl discovers piano music coming from an unusual-looking cabin. The pianist, a stooped, balding, strangely-dressed man, emerges and addresses Burl. The man is willing to share his Arrowroot biscuits with him, so Burl listens to his banter. He learns that the man is Nathaniel Orlando Gow, a composer taking advantage of the rural quiet and solitude to concentrate on his work. Gow reluctantly allows Burl to stay the night, but Burl figures out this eccentric figure can use someone to do the chores, make coffee, and fetch medicine from an arsenal of pills in the medicine cabinet. When the composer decides to return to civilization, Burl convinces Gow to leave him at the retreat as a caretaker. When Burl gets news that Gow has died, his long experience with living a secret life and telling lies presents Burl with a daring plan to keep the cabin as his own.

The story's unique spin on the "odd couple" theme, combined with Wynne-Jones's graceful prose, helped it capture the Governor General's Award and makes it a rewarding novel for better readers.

Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books, 1996
[original 1995]

ISBN 0–88899–263–7

Awards:

Governor General's Literary Award, 1995

MEN OF STONE

Gayle Friesen

Men of Stone is a coming-of-age story that draws parallels between people caught up in the currents of political strife in post-revolution Russia and current-day teens caught up in their own territorial wars. Fifteen-year-old Ben is feeling overwhelmed: he's started senior high, his best friend Stan is having problems at home, and he is being bullied by a group of other boys who call him "ballerina boy." The leader of the group, Claude, has even warned him to stay away from Kat, the girl Ben would most like to befriend. The prospect of a visit from Great-Aunt Frieda doesn't appeal to Ben any more than contact with the rest of his family. At school, however, his class has begun a social studies unit on Russian history, and Frieda, born just before the Russian Revolution, has lived a good part of that history. Frieda tells Ben about her life in a Mennonite community, separated from her baby son, with her husband imprisoned by soldiers with their rifles—men of stone. Amazingly, the old woman has kept a graceful balance to her life. As he spends time with Frieda and struggles to help Stan, Ben gradually realizes how fortunate he is to have a family—including Aunt Frieda. A very accessible read, the story portrays bullying and some violence.

"A thousand thoughts crowded into my mind as she left the room: horses walking into living rooms, chewing freshly baked buns; twelve laughing and crying children in one small house; tree-lined streets; men in army boots, storming through doors, taking people from their warm beds. Men of stone, she had said. Men with no eyes. Strangers with no reason to hate, who hated all the same. Claude." pp. 90–91

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press Ltd., 2000

ISBN 1–55074–782–7

NO PRETTY PICTURES

Anita Lobel

"During the years of flight I had heard the fearful world Konzentrationslager so many times. But I had never had a picture in my head of what a concentration camp might really be like. All I knew now was that what we had dreaded the most had finally happened. I was ten years old. My brother was eight. We were Jews. The Nazis had found us out and caught us at last." p. 87

No Pretty Pictures is the autobiographical story of Anita Lobel's childhood, as she struggled to survive the programs against the Jewish populace of Poland during the Nazi occupation. Anita was barely five when her father went into hiding to escape the roundup of Jews in Krakow. Her mother had falsified papers allowing her to move freely for a while, but when the program against them intensified, the family's Polish–Catholic nanny, Niania, fled with the children to her own small village. Anita's younger brother was disguised as a girl and Niania declared that the two were her daughters. When the village was combed by the Nazis looking for Jewish hideaways, the trio escaped back to Krakow and found sanctuary in a Benedictine convent. Before long they were discovered there, and the children were wrested away from Niania, imprisoned and sent to a nearby concentration camp. Auschwitz and Ravensbruck were the next stops along the line. There, the children faced starvation and disease but miraculously made it through to their liberation in 1945, and against all odds, were reunited with their parents in Sweden following the war.

Lobel writes about the horrors of the Holocaust with heart wrenching detail. Reviewing both her incarceration and the slow recovery afterwards, Lobel writes candidly of the loathing she had for herself as part of a reviled group, and the slow healing that allowed her to rebuild and grow.

New York, NY: Avon Books,
Inc., Avon Camelot, 2000
[original 1998]

ISBN 0-380-73285-8

Awards:

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 1998

OUT OF THE DUST

Karen Hesse

Out of the Dust is an unusual example of historical fiction that tells the story of a family in Texas during the Great Depression in a unique free verse form. Billy Jo is 14 years old in 1934, when Arley Wanderdale asks her if she would like to play the piano at the Palace Theatre on Wednesday nights. Mama is expecting and Daddy is trying to figure out how to keep the farm going. By summer, Billy Jo is playing gigs with the Black Mesa Boys in spots all around Lubbock, Texas, where crowds are grateful to hear a rag or two played by a long-legged red-haired girl.

In July, everything changes when Ma, mistaking a pail of kerosene for water, is badly burned. Billy Jo, trying to toss the flaming pail out of the kitchen, ends up splashing it over her mother and burning her own hands horribly. When the baby is born, Ma dies first and then the newborn boy. Billy Jo's father tries to drown his sorrows in alcohol. By winter, Billy Jo begins, painfully, to try to play piano again, but her wounded hands can no longer create the kind of music that could make people forget their misery. In the presence of her father, Billy Jo feels ever more invisible and alone, until she finally decides to run away.

Hesse captures the emotion and the landscape of the story through lyrical language and precise use of detail. The book's unusual format—brief chapters that unfold in free verse—is accessible to all levels of readers.

"Tonight, for a little
while
in the bright hall
folks were almost
free,
almost free of dust,
almost free of debt,
almost free of fields
of withered wheat.
Most of the night I
think I smiled."
p. 116

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Karen Hesse*, 1998 [21 min. BPN 2075907].

New York: Scholastic Inc.,
Scholastic Signature, 1999
[original 1997]

ISBN 0-590-37125-8

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1998

THE PLAYMAKER

J. B. Cheaney

"I dared not show my face on the docks: they would no doubt be watching, as they had before. Starling had been right about that. Perhaps she was right about other things as well. What I needed was a place in London where I might be free from detection and still earn a living. A place where I could fit immediately into a set or trade and go about in company—unnoticed, even disguised. A place where no one watching for me would ever think to look." pp. 60–61

The Playmaker is a mystery-adventure set in Elizabethan England. With the sudden death of his mother, 14-year-old Richard Malory finds himself in London trying to track down a lawyer who may know the whereabouts of Richard's father who abandoned his family and disappeared years ago. Richard gets a job with a wine merchant but is soon robbed and realizes his life is in danger. He meets a girl named Star who, after hearing him recite psalms, suggests he approach her employer. Richard seizes the opportunity only to discover that it is a company of actors and he will be expected to play the female roles. At first he is not very good at it, but he gets better, even winning the role of Perdita in William Shakespeare's new play *A Winter's Tale.* During the months that the theatres are closed in London, Richard works as a copier and is sent by The Globe to the rival theatre, The Rose, where he discovers they have stolen the plot of Shakespeare's new play. There he also hears familiar lines penned by his father to his mother many years ago, and begins to wonder if his father is alive—perhaps even watching him.

Cheaney's robust and rousing story has some dramatic twists and turns of plot. Elizabethan London is effectively displayed, as is the rich, behind-the-scenes detail of Shakespearean theatre. The story is set against the Catholic–Protestant conflict in England at the time. In 1597, with an aging Queen Elizabeth on the throne and no heir, it seems that a Catholic may again rule the country that has been fiercely Protestant over the decades of Elizabeth's reign. Providing information on this historical context will prepare students for the violence in this lengthy but rewarding read.

New York, NY: Random House
Children's Books, Dell Yearling,
2002
[original 2000]

ISBN 0–440–41710–4

RED SCARF GIRL: A MEMOIR OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Ji-li Jiang

Red Scarf Girl recounts author Ji-li Jiang's personal nightmare during the Cultural Revolution. In 1966, Chairman Mao, disillusioned with perceived failures in rebuilding the nation, begins the Cultural Revolution to erase any vestiges of the old order or foreign influence. At the time, Ji-li lives in Shanghai with her father, an actor at a children's theatre, her mother, once an actress and now with a secure job at a sports-equipment store, her younger sister and brother, and her doting grandmother. Life for the family includes an apartment with running water, a maid, and the laughter and talk of visiting theatre friends.

The novel tells how Ji-li's comfortable world begins to unravel from the day the 12-year-old was invited to audition for the elite Central Liberation Army Arts Academy. The move from elementary school to junior high spirals into horror as classmates learn that the Jiangs were landowners in Shanghai before the revolution—a taint that marks them in the eyes of the new order. Her closest friend is An Yi, also from a blacklisted family, and Ji-li is shocked when An Yi's grandmother commits suicide because of the harassment of the Red Guards. In the coming months, the Jiang apartment is raided, Ji-li's father is imprisoned, and her grandmother is given the humiliating job of sweeping the alley outside the apartment twice a day. Ji-li herself is urged by the Revolutionary Committee to denounce her parents, but it is something she cannot do.

> *"I wondered what I would be doing if I had been born into a red family instead of a black one. Searching people's houses? Hating landlords and rightists? Of course I would hate them; I hated them even now ... But I had felt sorry for Old Qian even though he was wrong ... The harder I tried to figure things out, the more confused I felt. I wished I had been born into a red family so I could do my revolutionary duties without worrying."*
> *p. 126*

New York, NY:
HarperTrophy, 1998
[original 1997]

ISBN 0–06–446208–0

THE RETURN

Sonia Levitin

"We had been hearing rumors. Jews leaving Ethiopia, a few at a time, walking far, far, then getting to the land promised in the Bible. Zion. Israel. Every day of our lives we have prayed that we might someday return to Jerusalem. But a prayer is one thing, reality is another." p. 10

The Return recounts a terrible chapter in modern history: the persecution of Jewish communities in Ethiopia. The story begins in a small village high in the Ethiopian mountains, where the main character, Desta, and her siblings were raised. Desta's older brother, Joas, is convinced that it is time for them to join a group headed first for Sudan and then Israel. When a rendezvous with a larger group fails, Desta, Joas and their younger sister Almaz decide to continue the tortuous journey that even brought abuse to their attempts to buy food. Finally Joas believes they have caught up to the others, spotting a camp in the distance. He has his sisters stay hidden while he scouts ahead. To the girls' horror, he is shot by brigands. After burying Joas, Desta is determined to continue the journey that meant so much to him.

Before reaching Sudan, they catch up with the advance group, which has hired a guide to do their marketing for them and to help them avoid attacks. In Sudan, they confront massive refugee camps where there is little shelter and inmates fight a constant battle with disease, famine and a scarcity of water. There are rumours, though, of Jewish refugees being spirited away by bus to a new life in Israel, which Desta, thinks is an impossible dream.

Sonia Levitin presents Desta as a character with realistic hopes and fears, thrust from a tradition-locked community into a world of great change. The novel brings to life the children's Jewish community, with its customs, language and religious rituals developed over centuries. It also creates a vivid picture of the persecution, abuse and genocide that Jewish Ethiopians suffered because of their religion and ethnic background. Within this context, the book presents violence, religious/ethnic intolerance and sexual content, which will require sensitive discussion with students.

New York, NY: Ballantine Books, Fawcett Juniper, 1987

ISBN 0–449–70280–4

Awards:

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 1987

SHIPWRECK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

Jennifer Armstrong

Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World recounts the 1914 true story of the Endurance, which Shackleton planned to sail from South America to Antarctica. The journey failed when the ship became locked into pack ice a hundred miles from the Antarctic coast. What emerged from the venture was a true-life survival story unrivaled in the history of polar exploration. Against incredible odds, Shackleton managed to bring his entire crew back to England in 1916. This nonfiction account tells how the crew watched their vessel being crushed to pieces by ice, dragged supplies and lifeboats over disintegrating ice floes, survived blizzards and managed to navigate, in their small boats, the earth's most treacherous waters. Finally reaching solid ground on Elephant Island, Shackleton decided that he, along with five of the crew, would sail on to South Georgia Island and make their way to one of the whaling stations there to get help. Forced to land on an inhospitable side of the island, he left half of his contingent and crossed a glacial mountain range to reach the nearest whaling station. Numerous photographic plates taken by the crew during the adventure enhance Armstrong's well-researched account of the events.

"On the next day, January 19, the fist of the Antarctic closed around the ship: Endurance was surrounded by ice pack, with no open water in sight. They had sailed 12,000 miles from London. They had picked their way through 1,000 miles of ice pack. Now they were less than 100 miles from the continent itself, but Endurance would never reach it." p. 22

New York, NY: Crown
Publishers Inc., 2000
[original 1998]

ISBN 0-375-81049-8

TOUCHING SPIRIT BEAR

Ben Mikaelsen

> *"As he tossed and turned, Cole found himself growing angry again. He tried to fight back the familiar rage with his memory of touching Spirit Bear, but nothing seemed to ward off the bitterness and frustration that flooded his mind. Edwin had been right when he said that anger was never forgotten."* p. 141

Touching Spirit Bear is an easy to read, high-action adventure story about a troubled teenager learning to survive in the wilderness while dealing with his anger. After a brutal assault on a Grade 9 classmate, Cole Matthews must spend a year by himself on an isolated island off the BC coast. The idea is developed by a Native program—Circle Justice—in which those concerned devise a healing path for the offender. But Cole is not interested in healing; his plan is to play along and stay out of jail.

Garvey, an Aboriginal parole officer, and Edwin, a Tlingit elder, accompany Cole to the island and arrange to periodically bring food and supplies. Edwin tells Cole that there is a Spirit Bear off the coast of British Columbia, which is pure white and revered by the Tlingit for its pride, dignity and honour. Cole boasts that he would kill the bear if he saw it. Once the men leave, Cole lets loose his contained rage and burns everything, including the shelter. His attempt to swim to another island fails and Cole finds himself back on the shore, cold, exhausted and hungry. After his failed escape attempt, Cole encounters the Spirit Bear and almost loses his life when the bear mauls him. Fortunately, Garvey and Edwin return and find Cole.

After six months of physical rehabilitation, they are not sure whether Cole should be allowed to return to the island and complete his sentence. They are concerned, too, that Peter, Cole's victim, has slipped into a deep depression and has attempted suicide. The book portrays graphic violence and deals with difficult issues, but it also presents an intriguing look at justice, reformation and personal responsibility. Ultimately, Cole has a moment of revelation from touching the Spirit Bear, and begins to change his attitude and his life.

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0–380–80560–X

AN UNBROKEN CHAIN: MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Henry A. Oertelt, Stephanie Oertelt Samuels

The Unbroken Chain retraces a chain of 18 harrowing events that Henry Oertelt experienced as a Jewish teenager in Berlin during World War II. Each event in the chain was essential for Oertelt to survive the Holocaust. The story begins in 1933, when Oertelt was 12 years old. At 14 his education was halted, so he became a furniture apprentice. By describing the restrictions imposed on him—restrictions on shopping hours, attendance at public events, ownership of bicycles and radios—Oertelt clearly establishes the dramatic changes that quickly evolved in his life. At 22, Oertelt and his family were arrested and shipped to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. This was the first of five concentration camps and twenty-two months of captivity.

This is a gripping memoir of adventure and survival. Some students might find the vivid presentation of atrocities disturbing but these scenes are made more bearable by the knowledge that Oertelt survived due to his own optimism and the kindness of others.

"No more than two feet in front of me stood an SS officer, with his back turned halfway toward me. His gun slung over his shoulder, he was guarding the truck and apparently the door. This was obviously not the first time he had experienced people trying to escape. We were trapped!" p. 52

Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2000

ISBN 0-8225-2952-1

WESTMARK

Lloyd Alexander

"'Even if the cause is good,' said Theo, 'what does it do to the people who stand against it? and the people who follow it?' 'Next time you see Jellinek,' said Florian, 'ask him if he's ever found a way to make an omelet without breaking eggs.' 'Yes,' Theo said. 'Yes, but men aren't eggs.'" p. 138

Westmark is an historical fantasy novel featuring Theo, an orphan and printer's apprentice, who flees from town after his master is killed by the militia, and ends up travelling around the kingdom of Westmark with a troupe of roadside performers. Count Bombas (a charlatan with many aliases) is the leader of the group, and puts Theo to work in their act as a wild Trebizonian. In the next town, Mickle, a street urchin with a talent for ventriloquism, joins the troupe. It is Mickle's skill, in fact, that brings them their greatest success as she uses her projected voice to simulate contact with the dead in séances. The troupe's reputation reaches King Augustine who is grieving the loss of his only child. Through a séance, he believes he may be able to contact her. Never did anyone anticipate the truth: that Mickle might actually be the lost princess.

The *Westmark* trilogy is filled with adventure and skullduggery. It explores a number of human foibles and examines the uses and abuses of political power. Alexander's witty and elegant prose, splashes of word play, and traces of romance make this an ideal fantasy series for maturing readers.

New York, NY: Penguin Putnam
Inc., Firebird, 2002
[original 1981]

ISBN 0-14-131068-5

THE WILD CHILDREN

Felice Holman

The Wild Children is a story of homeless orphan children, struggling for survival during the Russian revolution around 1925. Twelve-year-old Alex wakes up one morning to discover that the rest of his family has been arrested by soldiers. On the advice of his teacher, Katriana Sokolova, Alex goes to Moscow to find his uncle. Cold and starving, travelling on foot, Alex arrives to find that his uncle is gone and his house has been taken over by the state. Close to collapse, Alex is taken in by a gang of boys living in the cellar of an abandoned bakery. They survive by begging and stealing. Peter, who seems to be the leader, has set down rules that the boys live by: everyone works and shares what they get; no one brings vodka or cocaine into the cellar. Alex decides to remain with them.

When the Moscow winter makes survival increasingly a struggle, Peter leads the group to a warmer area in southern Russia. Hitching rides on trains, they jump off at a rural spot and hide in some caves in the nearby hills. When a couple of the older boys get caught drug running and betray Peter to the authorities, the children are placed in an orphanage that is as bad as anywhere they have been. Alex remembers Katriana telling him of her brother in Leningrad who has helped people to escape from Russia. After Miska, one of the smallest boys, dies following a beating, the ragtag gang of twelve decides that they must escape.

The Russian vocabulary does not detract from the novel's wide appeal to male readers. A glossary is provided.

"If they could have looked down upon themselves from the height of a cloud, they would have seen that they were just a wave, a small one, in a large ocean of people along the roads to Moscow: people in wagons, people in sleds, people carrying people, but mostly people on their own two feet, dragging themselves by force toward something better—something less bad, at least—than they were leaving. From the known to the unknown." *p. 25*

New York, NY: Puffin Books,
1985
[original 1983]

ISBN 0–14–031930–1

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA

Ursula Le Guin

> *"'You summoned a spirit from the dead, but with it came one of the Powers of unlife. Uncalled it came from a place where there are no names. Evil, it wills to work evil through you. The power you had to call it gives it power over you: you are connected. It is the shadow of your arrogance, the shadow of your ignorance, the shadow you cast.'"*
> *p. 79*

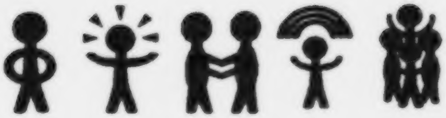
Le Guin's fantasy trilogy, beginning with ***A Wizard of Earthsea***, offers an elaborately detailed locale with its own peoples, beasts, culture and beliefs. *A Wizard of Earthsea* follows the coming-of-age of a young mage. As a boy, Duny learned spells and charms from his aunt, a witch. When their village is besieged by fierce fair-haired kargs, Duny summons fog and spins a concealment spell that sends the enemy scattering back to their ships. Duny's skill as an enchanter attracts the attention of Olgion, a mage who urges Duny's father to release the boy into his care. The thirteen-year-old is ready to receive his true name, Ged, and to begin his training as a mage.

On Roke Island, Ged attends the famous School for Wizards and advances into a thoughtful young scholar whose skills as a mage grow daily. However, he still has a reckless side. Although cautioned not to use his abilities before he is truly ready, Ged is goaded into a display of magic that releases an evil shadow-beast into the land. Facing the consequences alone, he decides to pursue it, even if it means sailing to the farthest reaches of Earthsea.

The lyrical prose in the book challenges readers to think about the power of language and how the act of naming is in many ways an act of creation. Themes of responsibility and friendship are established through vocabulary. Teachers should be aware that some students or communities might be offended by the presentation of magic in the book.

London, England: Penguin
Group, Puffin Books, 1971
[original 1968]

ISBN 0-140-30477-0



10-1

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Mark Twain

"And when we stepped onto the raft I says: 'Now, old Jim, you're a free man again, and I bet you won't ever be a slave no more.' 'En a mighty good job it wuz, too, Huck. It 'uz planned beautiful, en it 'uz done beautiful; en dey ain't nobody kin git up a plan dat's mo' mixed up en splendid den what dat one wuz.'" pp. 382–383

In ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***, Huck Finn, son of the town drunk, runs away to escape his father's brutality and the tender ministrations of the well-meaning woman who wishes to "civilize" him. He joins Jim, a runaway slave, who is fleeing to avoid being sold "down the river." The narrative traces the adventures of the two fugitives as they float down the Mississippi on a raft. The novel begins as a boy's adventure story, moves into a devastating criticism of society in the central part of the book, and returns once more to youthful adventure at the conclusion.

The strength of the novel lies in its delineation of character, its humour, its satire, and is an excellent basis for discussion of society and human nature. The novel also allows for discussion of such concepts as point of view, thematic development, plot structure and the characteristics of the picaresque novel.

The book reflects that the society of the time supported slavery and denied the slaves any opportunities. Jim's apparent ignorance, therefore, loses all taint of discrimination and becomes not only understandable but inevitable. It is the white society Mark Twain criticizes, not the black. However ignorant Jim may appear, he is immensely superior in his humanity and moral standards to the majority of the whites he and Huck encounter on their travels.

Markham, ON: Penguin Books,
1966
[original 1884]

ISBN 140430180

THE ALCHEMIST: A FABLE ABOUT FOLLOWING YOUR DREAM

Paulo Coelho

The Alchemist is a gentle and charming adventure fable. It is told with magic and wonder by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. The main character of the book, Santiago, is an Andalusian shepherd boy who leaves Spain in search of treasure. Eventually, Santiago finds his way to the Egyptian desert where he meets an alchemist who offers metaphysical lessons and wisdom on life.

The message of the book is suggested by the subtitle: you find your purpose by following your own dreams and bliss. The book suggests that we must often go on a metaphorical and spiritual quest to fulfill our nature and destiny. However, despite some incidental allusions to God, Allah, the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Life, angels, rabbis and Sons of God, this novella does not demand religious belief and does not favour any specific religious denomination. Rather, it is an open-ended fable that will appeal to high school students who are beginning to ask their own questions about life's purpose and meaning. The story is simply written and appropriate for students at diverse reading levels.

"'My heart is a traitor,' the boy said to the alchemist, when they had paused to rest the horses. 'It doesn't want me to go on.' 'That makes sense,' the alchemist answered. 'Naturally it's afraid that, in pursuing your dream, you might lose everything you've won.' 'Well, then, why should I listen to my heart?' 'Because you will never be able to keep it quiet.'" p. 130

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Inc., 1998
First Harper Perennial edition
[original 1988]
167 pages

ISBN 0-06-250218-2

ANIMAL FARM

George Orwell

"Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? Only get rid of Man, and the produce of our labour would be our own. Almost overnight we could become rich and free. What then must we do? Why, work night and day, body and soul, for the overthrow of the human race!" *p. 5*

Animal Farm is a satiric utopia, an indictment of dictatorship and the abuse of power. The animals on Manor Farm drive out their master, Jones, and take over and administer the farm, adopting new principles consisting of seven commandments. The last of these is: "All animals are equal." Conditions on the farm soon become oppressive again and the animals discover that, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," especially the intelligent pigs that administer the rules and assume dominate positions.

This fable satirizes dictatorship and the abuse of power, integrating complex political ideas and paralleling closely the events of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. Orwell believed that Stalin betrayed the Marxist revolution and wanted to expose the nature of Russian communism.

The novel is reinforced by irony and symbolism, revealing both the good and evil aspects of society. The plot moves full circle from hopelessness to optimism to hopelessness, and is likely to generate a great deal of class discussion.

Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1979
[original 1945]

ISBN 0451514696

THE BOOK OF SMALL

Emily Carr

In ***The Book of Small***, Emily Carr, one of Canada's great painters, recalls her growing-up years in Victoria, British Columbia, in the 1870s. "Small" is her nickname as the youngest of three sisters: Big, Middle and Small.

This series of short, readable, lively literary sketches provides a sense of a Victoria which, even in its pioneer days, displays the Englishness and eccentricity that becomes part of its character. It also reflects the sensitivity to vivid detail of the artist as a child. The writing is simple, unaffected; the tone warm, often whimsical and humorous.

"The wind sauntered up the stream bumping into everything. It was not strong enough to sweep boldly up the tunnel, but quivered along, giving bluffs and boulders playful little whacks before turning the next corner and crumbling the surface of that pool." p. 71

The Book of Small might be used to encourage students to write their own autobiographical sketches—or writing up the reminiscences of family members—with particular attention to imitating Carr's selectivity, economy and eye for detail. It would also be suitable for oral reading or readers' theatre.

Toronto, ON: Clarke, Irwin
& Company Limited, 1966
[original 1942]

ISBN 0772002231

THE CHRYSALIDS

John Wyndham

"And God created man in His own image. And God decreed that man should have one body, one head, two arms and two legs: that each arm should be jointed in two places and end in one hand: that each hand should have four fingers and one thumb: that each finger should bear a flat fingernail ..."
p. 72

The Chrysalids tells of a time after a nuclear war in Labrador when the survivors believe the devastation is a punishment from God; and as a result, rigidly structure society so that any deviation from the "norm" is considered to be seditious. David Strom leads a group of young people who have telepathic powers and when their deviation is discovered, they must escape. At the climax of the pursuit, David and his friends are rescued by the New Zealanders, members of a neighbouring society that depicts the next stage of evolutionary development where telepathic communication is accepted.

Two themes are strongly emphasized. First, humankind must be able to accept individual differences and to adapt to change, while intolerance leads to hate and the destruction of civilization. Second, ambition and pride may be destructive when one attempts to control all others. The novel provides for interesting small and large group discussions. As with all speculative fiction, there may be concerns regarding future worlds with different ideologies.

London, England: Penguin Books, 1955

ISBN 774010991

DRAGONSBANE

Barbara Hambly

Dragonsbane is a fantasy in which John, a dragonslayer, and Jenny, a mage, journey to kill the dreaded Morkeleb, the fiercest of dragons. Through a series of adventures, Jenny is able to search for truth and realize her destiny. Jenny's sense of purpose and growing awareness of her needs and desires provides a powerful ending when she realizes that she can become a dragon—all powerful, or a human wife and mother.

Interesting discussions will develop regarding good versus evil, the use of power, and the giving up of one's life in the aid of others. There are strong thematic links to our struggles against evil while searching for truth are universal to humankind.

The use of magic and sorcery does not demand that students believe in this fantasy, but rather it is a tool to develop plot. The strength of this novel is in its writing style, character development, and decision-making processes. Students should enjoy class discussions regarding the moral dilemmas encountered by Jenny and John.

> *"'I cannot save you without knowing your name,' she said. 'If you slip beyond the bounds of your flesh, I need something by which to call you back.' Still that molten wrath surged through the weakness and pain. She remembered Caerdinn saying, 'Save a dragon, slave a dragon.'" p. 212*

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, 1986
[original 1985]

ISBN 0345349393

THE EDUCATION OF LITTLE TREE

Forrest Carter

"I liked the field plowing, though. It growed me up. When we walked down the trail to the cabin, it 'peared to me that my steps was lengthening quite some bit behind Grandpa. Granpa bragged on me a lot to Granma at the supper table and Granma agreed that it looked like I was coming on to being a man." p. 50

The Education of Little Tree tells the story of a young Cherokee boy who is brought up by his grandparents in a small mountain community in early 20th century America. He grows and matures as he learns about tolerance and understanding, while becoming sensitive to other people and the world of nature around him. Not only is Little Tree educated, but the reader also gains great respect and love for the Cherokee way of life. The story is told by Little Tree and is limited by his perceptions as a child, suggesting naiveté and honesty. The novel should promote an understanding of and empathy for Native peoples, as well as pride in Native culture.

Portrayals of animals are both positive and sensitive, using some Native cultural symbols and their implications to life. The Cherokee are presented as thrifty, sensitive and full of love, while the Caucasians are seen as powerful and insensitive. Any stereotyping of Native or white cultures reflects the values of the characters and can be dealt with in the classroom context. It is recommended that critical thinking exercises be presented that would enable a student to obtain a more balanced perspective on the racial-ethnic, religious, social-economic, and political aspects of the novel. These issues should be discussed during the study of this novel. Physical violence, racial epithets and profanity are reflective of the early 20th century.

Each chapter lends itself to being discussed independently. The novel's humorous style and use of satire develop the story's gently mocking tone. While the novel uses an autobiographical voice, it is a fictionalized account using a child's perception to enhance the humorous style. Character development and point of view are also strong features of the novel. It may be most appropriate for either small group or individual study.

Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1976

ISBN 0826308791

FATELESS

Imre Kertesz

Fateless, a nobel prize-winning novel is about the experiences of George Koves, a Jewish boy surviving in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. Although the book is fictional, it is informed by Imre Kertesz's own life as a Hungarian Jew who was imprisoned at Auschwitz and Buchenwald during his boyhood.

Fateless is a mixture of history and strong emotional content. It provides basic information about the appalling living conditions and constant fight for survival of those who were trapped by circumstances beyond their control. The narrative is told in a matter-of-fact manner in harrowing detail. The book's sometimes graphic language and references to violence, cruelty, racism, gender orientation and sexuality may be objectionable to some students and community members; however, these elements serve to vividly illustrate the treatment of Jewish people in concentration camps during World War II. Some of the scenes are intensely unnerving and may be particularly troublesome to students whose lives have been directly affected by racism, war, incarceration, violence or death. Teachers will need to provide some historical context and guide students' interpretations around these very sensitive issues.

"Only in Zeitz did I realize that captivity also has its gray, everyday days, or, rather, that true captivity is really a row of gray, everyday days."
p. 99

Evanston, IL:
Northwestern University Press
Hydra Books edition
[original 1975]
191 pages

ISBN 0–8101–1049–0

Awards:

Nobel Prize, 2002

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Tracy Chevalier

> *"I had not looked at the painting long—it was too strange seeing myself—but I had known immediately that it needed the pearl earring. Without it there were only my eyes, my mouth, the band of my chemise, the dark space behind my ear, all separate. The earring would bring them together. It would complete the painting. It would also put me out on the street." p. 195*

The ***Girl with a Pearl Earring*** is a simple, readable novel inspired by Johannes Vermeer's famous painting alluded to in the title. In a 1600s household, Griet, a sixteen-year-old servant becomes involved with the famous Dutch artist. Vermeer eventually paints her wearing his wife's pearl earrings, which are immortalized in the painting.

Although the narrative reflects the morals and values of the 17th century, it avoids the heavy descriptions frequently associated with historical fiction. Rather, the story focuses on Griet's maturation—emotionally, physically and sexually (teachers should be aware that some students or communities might be offended by the description of sexual acts in the text). The book explores gender politics, class structures and morality, as well as themes of loyalty and self-discovery: Griet is a survivor and protects her family despite the pressures of class difference in the Netherlands at that time.

This vibrant novel contains rich examples of characterization, setting and atmosphere, irony and symbolism. Introducing students to background information and examples of Vermeer's work early in the study may enhance students' understanding and interest of the text.

New York, NY: Penguin Group,
Plume Books, 2001
[original 1999; English
translation 1992]

ISBN 0–452–28215–2

MY FAMILY AND OTHER ANIMALS

Gerald Durrell

A custom official aptly describes the Durrell family in ***My Family and Other Animals*** as a "travelling circus and staff." Persuaded by her eldest son, Larry, Mrs. Durrell sells her home in England and takes her family to live on the island of Corfu for five years. The amusing and eccentric antics of the family are rivalled only by the author and youngest child's reminiscences of his boyhood. Gerald's fascination with animals resulted in incidents, such as snakes living in the bathtub and magpies ransacking the house. Freed from the rigours of regular schooling, Gerald spends his time investigating nature and acquiring a miscellany of oddly named pets.

Durrell's deft touch in creating humour is rare in nonfiction. Students may wish to use his writing as a model for creating their own comedy. The book inspires personal response and may be presented for full class, small group or individual study.

> *"Suddenly there came a rapid series of colossal explosions that rocked the house and set all the dogs barking downstairs. I rushed out on to the landing, where pandemonium reigned: the dogs had rushed upstairs in a body to join in the fun, and were leaping about, yelping excitedly. Mother looking wild and distraught, had rushed out of her bedroom in her voluminous nightie, under the impression that Margo had committed suicide. Larry burst angrily from his room to find out what the row was about, and Margo, under the impression that Peter had returned to claim her and was being slaughtered by Leslie, was fumbling at the lock on the attic door and screaming at the top of her voice."*
> *pp. 172–173*

Toronto, ON: Penguin
Books, 1977
[original 1956]

ISBN 0140013997

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Walter Lord

"And in a story headlined, 'Desirable Immigrants Lost,' the New York Sun *pointed out that, along with the others, 78 Finns were lost who might do the country some good.*

But along with the prejudices, some nobler instincts also were lost. Men would go on being brave, but never again would they be brave in quite the same way. These men of the Titanic *had a touch—"*
p. 112

A Night to Remember is on April 12, 1912 when the Titanic, the "unsinkable" British liner began its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York with over 2000 passengers, including the elite of British and American society. When the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank, over 1000 people drowned. This account emphasizes a fatal sense of invulnerability on the part of owners, crew and passengers. The fairly rigid class system in the early part of the 1900s is seen, to some extent, as determining the fate of all.

A Night to Remember is retold as a moment-by-moment, person-by-person account, from the sighting of the deadly iceberg to the rescue of survivors by the Carpathia, five hours later. The emphasis is on individual human reactions to the disaster as it occurs, and on the memories of survivors, 63 of whom the author interviewed in the process of writing the book. In spite of the number of people followed in the account, the story is relatively fast-paced and gripping. Lord's style is simple, clear, dispassionate; the vocabulary undemanding.

The sinking of the Titanic holds a continuing fascination for students that is increased by the saga of the search for, and discovery of, the wreckage. This book could be used as part of a "survival" nonfiction unit; or in conjunction with the equivalent type of "disaster" fiction, to examine significant differences in approach and treatment.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,
1956
[original 1955]

ISBN 0553205099

OCTOBER SKY

Homer Hickam

October Sky, easier-to-read than its length belies, is a rewarding book about a vanishing lifestyle represented by the 1950s small-town America. This entertaining and nostalgic memoir is centred on a group of high school friends in Coalwood, West Virginia, who share an avid enthusiasm for rocketry at a time when the United States space program was beginning. The boys experiment with scrap metal from the town's company mines, and eventually succeed in building functioning rockets. At the same time, Hickam struggles to avoid the fate of so many teens in his area—working in the mine—and for this reason, he comes into conflict with his miner-father.

Themes of sibling rivalry, the generation gap, freedom versus parental authority, marital difficulties and family loyalty are particularly well developed. Teachers may want to provide additional information on Wernher von Braun, Sputnik, the Space Race or life in the 1950s; however, the book connects with the dreams and problems of today's students despite the setting.

> *"There was, he reported, a huge flash in Hickam's yard and a sound like God Himself had clapped his hands. Then an arc of fire lifted up and up into the darkness, turning and cartwheeling and spewing bright sparks. The way the man told it, our rocket was a beautiful and glorious sight, and I guess he was right as far as it went. The only problem was, it wasn't our rocket that streaked into that dark, cold, clear, and starry night. It was my mother's rose-garden fence."*
> *pp. 43–44*

New York, NY:
Dell Publishing, 2000
[original 1998]
428 pages

ISBN 0–440–23550–2

OLIVER TWIST

Charles Dickens

"'I want a boy, and he mustn't be a big un. Lord!' said Mr. Sikes, reflectively, 'if I'd only got that young boy of Ned, the chimbley-sweeper's! He kept him small on purpose, and let him out by the job. But the father gets lagged; and then the Juvenile Delinquent Society comes, and takes the boy away from a trade where he was arning money, teaches him to read and write, and in time makes a 'prentice of him.'"
p. 141

The overall tone of ***Oliver Twist*** is romantic and sentimental, and the characters are charming, but the events do reveal the miseries of the poor. It is also a bitter social criticism set in London during the early 1800s. Oliver, who is illegitimate, starved and ill-treated, eventually becomes involved with a gang of thieves and pickpockets. After many adventures, he finds both friends and fortune.

The plot provides for interesting discussion on the varied characters, most of whom are one-sided, and reveals the extremes of human nature. Dickens' novel reflects how society at that time discriminated against the Jews and the poor.

Experienced readers should enjoy the novel, and class discussion may lead to further research into that era. The events that surround *Oliver Twist* may well surround some of our own poor, and that should encourage some interesting discussion.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,
Inc., 1981
[original 1838]

ISBN 0553210505

RANDOM PASSAGE

Bernice Morgan

Random Passage is regarded as one of the most widely read books about Newfoundland and is considered representative of its culture. The protagonist Lavinia Andrews is a seventeen-year-old living in a tiny outport of early Newfoundland. In her journal, she records the adventures of her family in this barren land in the language of the time and place.

This rich book deals with love, power, greed, forgotten pasts, missed opportunities, and the importance of community. The effect of adversity on character is the main focus in this coming-of-age romance. It also contains many 'exotic' elements associated with romantic historical fiction or adventure writing: privateers, polar bears, tragic love, madness and murder.

Morgan's novel lends itself to creative response and would make students more aware of a unique regional culture quite different from that of the prairies. The book does include negative references to Aboriginal peoples, violence, sexual references, and occasional inappropriate language. Teachers should be advised to discuss the concerns critically within their historical context.

> *"They come around the corner below the fish store and see, well down the beach, a sight so terrible that they cannot at first make any sense of it. A dirty white animal rears up on its hind legs, towering over and half-hiding the man it is attacking. The two are locked in a silent, deadly embrace, Ned clinging with all his strength to the beast's great paw, trying to force its claws back from his face." p. 174*

St. John's, NL: Breakwater,
2003
[original 1992]
269 pages

ISBN 1-55081-051-0

REBECCA

Daphne du Maurier

"Rebecca, always Rebecca. Wherever I walked in Manderley, wherever I sat, even in my thoughts and in my dreams, I met Rebecca." p. 244

Rebecca, Daphne du Maurier's Gothic romance–melodrama–mystery remains a popular literary staple. The story is narrated by the second wife of wealthy Maxim de Winter. The new Mrs. de Winter, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Rebecca, Maxim's dead wife, comes to live at the Manderley mansion on the Cornish coast. Feeling unwelcome and plagued by the presence of Rebecca in the house, Mrs. de Winter begins to unravel the mysterious sailing accident in which Rebecca was killed.

The novel illustrates the influence that charismatic people can have on the lives of others. This is especially evident with the new Mrs. de Winter as she wrestles with overcoming her own insecurities. *Rebecca* also deals with the feelings of loyalty, obsession, possessiveness and jealousy, and how these adversely affect the lives of others. Teachers will want to provide their students guidance as they explore some of the complex ethical questions that the novel explores.

This novel would lend itself to an examination of genre conventions of mystery, romance and melodrama. It could also be used effectively to study first-person point of view, setting and atmosphere, and would be appropriate for evoking personal response and creative assignments such as diaries, letters and student artwork.

Toronto, ON: Random House of Canada
Arrow edition
[original 1938]
344 pages

ISBN 0–09–986600–5

RICK HANSEN: MAN IN MOTION

Rick Hansen and Jim Taylor

Rick Hansen: Man in Motion is the modern success story of a man who gives hope and encouragement to all people, as well as to those in circumstances similar to his own. Hansen's activities, supported by many volunteers, created a recognition of and commitment to an awareness of the hopes, dreams and feelings of those with disabilities.

Born in British Columbia, Rick Hansen was disabled at a young age, but never let this inhibit his athletic or other endeavours. While in his 20s, he undertook a world Man in Motion tour, in his wheelchair, to draw attention to persons with disabilities, their aspirations and needs.

The book promotes critical thinking and an evaluation of personal values and attitudes toward people with disabilities. Students could be encouraged to look for similarities among all people. For example, Rick has a romance with his physiotherapist, Amanda Reid, whom he later marries. While Rick Hansen's Man in Motion tour occurred in the mid-1980s, he remains an excellent role model of a very successful individual.

> *"The hay was coming off the shoes. I was growing more relaxed and comfortable in the outside world, accepting and beginning to understand who this Rick Hansen person really was, relishing the companionship as much as the competition. And while all this was going on, I was learning more about the sport that would really become my passion." p. 55*

Markham, ON: Penguin
Books Canada Ltd., 1988
[original 1987]

ISBN 014011713X

SILAS MARNER

George Eliot

> *"'Nancy,' said Godfrey, slowly, 'when I married you, I hid something from you—something I ought to have told you. That woman Marner found dead in the snow—Eppie's mother—that wretched woman—was my wife: Eppie is my child."...*
>
> *'I oughtn't to have left the child unowned: I oughtn't to have kept it from you. But I couldn't bear to give you up, Nancy.'"*
> *pp. 162–163*

Silas Marner is a relatively short, yet stylistically polished novel providing a social, moral, religious and psychological commentary on 19th century rural England.

Eliot traces the life of Silas Marner, a skilled weaver in the village of Raveloe and a reclusive miser. His beloved gold is stolen but its place in his heart is taken by a small golden-haired child who mysteriously arrives at Marner's cottage, and whom Marner adopts and cares for. The plot has other mysterious and dramatic events, but it is essentially a fable of loss and redemption through love.

In spite of its brevity, this is a complex novel with a slow moving, two-fold plot that is united in the last third of the book. The vocabulary and use of dialect may prove challenging, but this edition contains a helpful glossary. There is also a good introduction and end pages of interesting "Activities" that are adaptable to students of different ability levels.

This may be a novel best reserved for a more advanced English 10 class, or for individual study.

Oxford, England: Heinemann
Educational, 1993
[original 1861]

ISBN 0435126040

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Ray Bradbury

In ***Something Wicked This Way Comes***, suspense and foreboding emanate from the very beginning of two boys' involvement with the Carnival and Pandemonium Shadow Show. They are caught in an evil nightmare where the old turn young and the young turn old, mirrors steal souls, and the exhibits within a wax museum are of living people. Before they can escape, they must confront the ultimate evil. This fantasy develops the idea of a secret dream or wish, but after that wish is granted, things are never the same.

The plot develops the idea of youth and goodness versus the carnival of evil. Youth is presented as wise, while those who are older, especially males, are shown to be desirous of the qualities of youth. One of the themes of the novel is that our own fears may destroy us. While there is horror, there is no descriptive violence. The book provides an opportunity to look at language and the power of indirect description. There are some racial and religious references, but they are used as a backdrop for the social setting of the carnival.

This is an excellent novel for small group discussions or for those students who enjoy speculative fiction and would like to enhance their reading skills in this area.

> *"'Jim, the music that the calliope played when Mr. Cooger got younger—'*
> *'Yeah?'*
> *'It was the 'Funeral March'! Played backwards!'*
> *'Which 'Funeral March'?'*
> *'Which! Jim, Chopin only wrote one tune! The 'Funeral March!'*
> *'But why played backward?'*
> *'Mr. Cooger was marching away from the grave, not towards it, wasn't he, getting younger, smaller, instead of older and dropping dead?'" p. 65*

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1963
[original 1962]

ISBN 0553280325

THINKING LIKE A MOUNTAIN

Robert Bateman (with Rick Archbold)

"The human race may finally be starting to learn from its mistakes. We may be standing on the brink of a revolution in the way we relate to all other creatures and living systems on the planet. But before we can find a new path, we need to take our heads out of the sand and embrace new ways of life. We need to pay attention." p. 33

Thinking Like a Mountain is a passionate, eloquent plea for conservation of nature and the planet. Bateman is a well-known Canadian artist and environmentalist who writes movingly about how nature has changed from his childhood to the present day. In thoughtful, concise chapters, he clearly indicts the influence of capitalistic greed and consumption on the destruction of nature. The book is also illustrated by Bateman's own drawings.

Bateman's tone is positive and passionate. The book urges immediate change and includes a bibliography for further reading on the topic. The accessibility and balanced perspective of Bateman's text provides a good introduction to ecological issues. This reflective, user-friendly text invites personal, creative, critical and problem-solving responses on many levels. In particular, most students will have strong opinions about his assessment of their age group in the chapter titled "Homo sapiens Teenager consumerensis."

Toronto, ON: Penguin Books
Canada Ltd., 2002
[original 2000]
130 pages

ISBN 014301272–X

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Harper Lee

In Alabama, during the Depression, Scout, the protagonist of ***To Kill a Mockingbird***, develops a growing awareness of good and evil in the world around her; racial and class prejudice within both the black and white communities, and the religious prejudices of the various sects of the area. Counterbalancing this are the positive qualities of compassion, sympathy, understanding and wisdom demonstrated by various characters, primarily Scout's father, Atticus.

Told from Scout's point of view, the novel is a look at the past: a child's experiences described with the perception of an adult. The novel deals with complex ethical issues, and may require a great deal of class discussion. Characters, such as Atticus, demonstrate that one individual can make a difference.

Treatment of blacks in Alabama is described clearly and movingly, and the historical time frame is accurate. Some of the characters use language indicating racial and class prejudices; however, this language reflects the attitudes and circumstances of the people at that time. The novel promotes tolerance and understanding through the main characters of Scout and Atticus Finch.

> *"'You think about that' Miss Maude was saying. 'It was no accident. I was sittin' there on the porch last night, waiting. I waited and waited to see you all come down the sidewalk, and as I waited I thought, Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that. And I thought to myself, well, we're making a step—it's just a baby-step, but it's a step.'"* p. 216

New York, NY: J. B.
Lippincott Company, 1960

ISBN 044508376X

Awards:

Pulitzer Prize, 1961

TOUCH THE DRAGON: A THAI JOURNAL

Karen Connelly

> *"He talks about spicy food, a famous Buddhist monk who is also a great fortune-teller, the school I will go to, the people who are anxious to meet me. When I ask why these people want to meet me, he giggles. 'Why, because you are a falang.' A foreigner. It is my first Thai word." p. 2*

Touch the Dragon is a first-person journal recounting Karen Connelly's one-year stay in Thailand as a 17-year-old exchange student. The memoir made Connelly, at 24 years old, the youngest writer to win a Governor General's Award.

The book is about the honest frustrations of a teenager trying to cope with the alienation and cultural shock of living in a foreign country away from her family, boyfriend and familiar surroundings. With passion, humour and some mildly course language, the memoir gradually reveals how Connelly comes to understand, appreciate and eventually miss the exotic beauty of the Thai people. The accessible style of this text could lead naturally to student writing as well as travel-focused projects.

Winnipeg, MB
Turnstone Press, 1992
206 pages

ISBN 0–8801–162–8

WAITING FOR THE RAIN

Sheila Gordon

Waiting for the Rain is a South African tale of a friendship between two boys, one black and one white. The boys develop a harmonious childhood relationship oblivious to the discord around them. As the boys grow older, their differences are accentuated. Unlike Tengo, Frikkie has many opportunities for advancement in society. Tengo is shocked by the injustice to and maltreatment of his people on the farm, in the townships and cities. When Tengo and Frikkie meet again, both their dreams have been altered by the demands of their respective societies.

Through this rather simple narrative, the writer presents opposing views, factions and precepts of South African society. The innocence of youth is transformed by the burdens and tensions of a troubled society. While this subject matter may be challenging and sensitive to some students, the strength of this novel is its structure, character development, point of view, setting and symbolism.

> *"He remembered how, when he had been unpacking the first box of books, he had felt it held something magic for him. Perhaps the magic, he thought now, was in knowing—understanding certain things that Frikkie and the oubaas were ignorant of, which gave him a power that lessened their hold on him...." p. 48*

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1989
[original 1987]

ISBN 0553279114

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND

W. O. Mitchell

> *"Within him something was opening, releasing shyly as the petals of a flower open, with such gradualness that he was hardly aware of it. But it was happening: an alchemy imperceptible as the morning wind, a growing elation of such fleeting delicacy and pregnancy that he dared not turn his mind to it for fear that he might spoil it, that it might be carried away as lightly as one strand of spider web on a sigh of a wind. He was filled with breathlessness and expectancy, as though he were going to be given something, as though her were about to find something."*
> *p. 107*

Toronto, ON: Seal Books, 1982
[original 1947]

ISBN 0770417701

Awards:

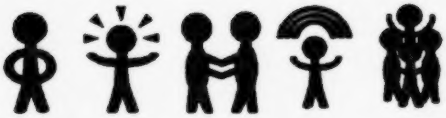
Eugene Field Award, 1947

Canadian Classics Committee, 1982

Who Has Seen the Wind, a Canadian classic, tells the story of Brian, a boy growing up in a small prairie town during the thirties. He gradually comes to accept life as he finds it—imperfect, sometimes brutal and tragic, but ordered somehow by a benevolent, all-pervading power.

Failure and frustration are often visible as Brian looks at the life of his small town. Superficially, the view is tragic despite its whimsically humorous atmosphere. Brian encounters defeat, cruelty, injustice, misunderstanding and death. But, in spite of his personal contact with the harsh realities of existence, he emerges with a view of life that is essentially positive: birth and death, struggle and failure, are a part of nature and belong in the scheme of things. The book offers rich material for the study of symbolism, prose style, character, setting, plot structure, philosophy and psychology.

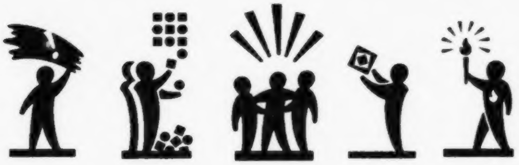
The novel can be approached from the philosophical, the psychological or the literary point of view. A thorough study should include all aspects.



10-2

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN

Ernest J. Gaines

> *"'Just one more time, and I'll kill you.' She looked at everybody there. 'That go for the rest of y'all,' she said. 'You free, then you go'n act like free men. If you want to act like you did on that plantation, turn around now and go on back to that plantation.'" p. 19*

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman is a searching portrayal of life as a black woman living in the deep American south. Ernest Gaines taped Miss Jane Pittman's reminiscences in 1962 when she was already over 100 years old. Her account details the suffering and humiliations that blacks faced in their daily lives. However, through it all, Pittman maintains her faith. As a result, this uplifting perspective celebrates the unfolding of a determined spirit in the face of adversity.

Gaines writes in a clear, readable style, using Pittman as the first person narrator.

New York, NY: Bantam Books, Inc., 1972
[original 1971]

ISBN 0553205854

Awards:

Commonwealth Club of California, 1972

THE BLUE SWORD

Robin McKinley

In ***The Blue Sword***, Harry Crewe's father dies, so she leaves her home and travels to the frontier where her elder brother, Richard, is stationed. Living under the care of her brother's superiors, Sir Charles and Lady Amelia, Harry finds life confining until Corlath, ruler of the neighbouring kingdom of Daria, comes seeking an alliance against the threat of Thurra and his empire. Inspired by his "gift," or "kelar," Corlath believes that Harry is important to the survival of his people, and so he kidnaps her. She trains as a king's rider, and in the end defies Corlath, whom she has come to love, and saves his kingdom. Corlath admits his misjudgement, and this fantasy ends happily. In this novel, women are shown to be equally powerful and worthy of respect as are men. The relationship between Harry and Corlath demonstrates the importance of love and respect in keeping people together. Tolerance for other cultures and for the differences between people is encouraged. *The Blue Sword* may appeal particularly to female readers, though the action should attract the interest of all students.

> *"Take strength from your own purpose, for you will know what you must do, if you let yourself; trust your horse and the cat that follows you, for there are none better than they, and they love you; and trust your sword, for she holds the strength of centuries and she hates what you are learning to hate. And trust the Lady Aerine, who visits you ... and trust your friendships. Friends you will have need of, for in you two worlds meet." p. 164*

New York, NY: The Berkley
Publishing Group, 1987
[original 1982]

ISBN 0441068804

Awards:

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1982

Newbery Honor Book, 1983

THE CAGE

Ruth Minsky Sender

"I must remember my number. But I must not forget my name. I must not let them wipe out my name. Riva Minska. Number 55082." p. 175

The Cage, set in and around 1942, is an autobiography relating coming-of-age experiences during the Holocaust. Sixteen-year-old Riva is a Jewish girl living in a hopeless Polish ghetto. After Nazis take her mother away, Riva struggles to care for her brothers and maintain a sense of family despite the horror around them. The narrative is presented as easy-to-read fragments of experience in Riva's diary. She uses the writing to keep herself together in an atmosphere of prejudice, discrimination and daily hardship.

Students will appreciate this enthralling perspective on adolescent suffering in the context of the Holocaust. Students might be invited to write their own memoirs and narratives about keeping themselves together during their own times of hardship. The novel contains ethnic/religious epithets, gender references, and descriptions of intolerance and violence. Teachers should discuss these issues critically within their historical context.

New York, NY:
Simon & Schuster
Children's Publishing
Division, 1997
[original 1986]
264 pages

ISBN 0–689–81321–X

A CHILD IN PRISON CAMP

Shizuye Takashima

In ***A Child in Prison Camp***, artist Shizuye Takashima records in words and paintings, her experiences as a child in a prison camp. At the age of 11, she and her family, along with other Japanese Canadians, were removed from their homes on the West coast of Canada and sent by the Canadian government to an internment camp in the interior of British Columbia. The family lost their civil rights, their home, and their business. Takashima vividly describes the actual camp, the housing, the schooling, the humiliation, and the loss of freedom and rights.

The book is an example of racism in Canadian history. Not only does it describe the actual happenings, but Takashima's story shows the effects of childhood experiences on one's life. It was not until 1984 that the Canadian government condemned this internment and offered financial restitution.

Teachers may need to explain the historical background before beginning the book. Sensitivity to the subject is needed for successful presentation of this personal account. Discussion of why and how people react in a time of crisis is important. This book would work well with a combined English–social studies approach and could lead to student research on such topics as World War II, the atom bomb, Japanese culture, the human will to survive, and prejudice. Either full class or small group study would be effective.

> *"'That's nothing—a Jap is a Jap, whether you're born here or not!' 'Even if I changed my name?' 'Yes, you look oriental, you're a threat.' 'A threat? Why?' 'God only knows!' Yuki replies. 'It's mostly racial prejudice, and jealousy. Remember we had cleared the best land all along the Fraser Valley. Good fisherman. This caused envy, so better to kick us out. The damn war is just an excuse.'" p. 46*

Montreal, PQ: Tundra
Books, 1989
[original 1971]

ISBN 0887762417

Awards:

Canadian Association of Children's Librarians Gold Medal, 1971

Look of Books Award, 1972

CHILDREN OF THE RIVER

Linda Crew

"She liked the American ideal of everyone being equal—even a peanut farmer could be President—but at times like this she missed the strict rules one followed in Kampuchea. At home she would have known their respective ranks and spoken accordingly, but here it was all so treacherously free and loose. A person might make a terrible mistake without knowing it." p. 101

In ***Children of the River***, Sundara flees Cambodia with her aunt, uncle, grandma and two nephews to the United States, where they struggle to make a living and adapt to a new culture. Sundara falls for an all-American boy, but their different political and cultural backgrounds make a relationship impossible until they are able to reach an understanding of each other's heritage. Sundara also has to face her overwhelming feeling of responsibility for her niece's death.

A tender, moving and believable story, this novel identifies and highlights the difficulties of moving into a different culture, especially when the past involves violence and sexual abuse. The flashbacks are well-integrated, and students in small group or full class study should find an interesting blend of internal and external conflicts that lead naturally to research. The book strongly emphasizes the idealistic universal message that individuals have a personal responsibility to make a positive difference.

Regardless of origin or mother tongue, students should be able to identify with the intergenerational conflicts and can be expected to respond strongly to the differences between Cambodian and North American culture and politics.

New York, NY: Doubleday
Canada Ltd., 1989

ISBN 0440210224

Awards:

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1989

Children's Book Award for older readers, International Reading Association, 1989

CRABBE

William Bell

Crabbe is a highly entertaining novel by popular Canadian author William Bell. It captures the wilderness adventure of a mixed-up adolescent. The first-person narrator is Franklin Crabbe, a chatty, funny but troubled eighteen-year-old. Feeling like an outsider and fed up with what he sees as adult hypocrisy, Crabbe runs away from home and goes off to seek freedom. As he learns to survive in the Algonquin Park wilderness, he meets and falls in love with Mary Pallas, a kind woman who has her own secrets to hide. Through his relationship with her, Crabbe finds his identity and purpose, ultimately taking the help she gave him to become independent, be himself and learn to survive in a confused, often irrational world.

Crabbe contains minor contextualized coarse language, references to mercy killing and a few sexual references.

Because the book is set up in journal entries, it provides opportunities to explore how point of view influences the presentation of characters and conflict. Students might also be encouraged to try their own journal writing.

> *"Layer by layer I was being stripped away: the ordeal with the bear: the waterfall: my breaking down tonight and admitting what I never before admitted to anyone, including myself. What would happen, I wondered, when the last layer was peeled off? What would be left?" p. 81*

Markham, ON:
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002
[original 1986]
169 pages

ISBN 0–7736–7483–7

DARE

Marilyn Halvorson

"He didn't belong there. He belonged here. And that meant I was trapped. Life was such a rip-off. The whole world was full of people who wanted someone to need them. Me, I just wanted to be a loner and what did I get? A kid brother who thought I was the Lone Ranger and who just wanted to hang around with me and be Tonto." p. 65

Dare is the name of the angry and confused 15-year-old who, with his 12-year-old brother, Ty, have lived with their grandmother in the same small Alberta town for five years. When they are left orphaned after her stroke, Laura McConnell, a substitute teacher and rancher, lets them live with her. Dare is the typical rebel character—swearing, drinking and driving, fighting, and even spending some time in jail. However, Dare matures as he learns to accept responsibility and confronts his part in his mother's death.

The realistic dialogue and intensity of Dare's emotions enable students to identify with this character's turmoil, yet realize how feelings can be changed without losing face. Effective characterizations of a rebellious, defiant teenager and sensitive and believable adults add to an action-filled story that is best suited for full class study.

Toronto, ON: General
Paperbacks, 1990
[original 1988]

ISBN 0773672672

DEATHWATCH

Robb White

"He and this man Madec were locked together, chained together in a struggle for life itself—a struggle with no niceties, no rules of behavior, no sportsmanship, no gentlemanly conduct. Madec could not leave him. The struggle had gone too far for that. Nor, on the other hand, could Ben escape." p. 67

Deathwatch, a fast-moving and easy-reading narrative, revolves around the tale of Ben, a young geology student working as a hunting guide. Ben finds himself locked in an intense struggle to survive when the expedition he is on turns into a manhunt.

Madec, an oil executive, hires Ben to escort him through the Southern California mountains in search of bighorn sheep. Madec accidentally kills an old prospector, and Ben's sense of justice demands that he report this incident to the authorities; however, Madec wants to ignore the death and continue the hunt. These two men are chained together by their different outlooks on the situation. A struggle to outwit each other soon develops.

Deathwatch presents clear contrasts in setting, mood and character types. A study of foreshadowing, symbolism, conflict and plot could also be undertaken. The ending, although abrupt, provides opportunity for open-ended discussion and various writing projects relating to decision making and the question of ethics.

Toronto, ON: Doubleday
Canada, 1972

ISBN 0440917409

DOVE

Robin Lee Graham (with Derek L.T. Gill)

"Loneliness was to ride with me for a thousand days, and throughout the longest nights. At time it was like something I could touch. Loneliness slunk aboard as the lights of Catalina Island began to fade, and I told myself that time and distance would destroy it. How wrong I was." p. 19

Dove is an inspirational nonfiction account of the author's remarkable five-year solo voyage around the world when he was only sixteen years old. Graham journeyed 30 000 nautical sea miles with his cats on a twenty-four foot sloop. Along the way, he became homesick, was joined by his father and friends, met his future wife Patti in Fiji, married her in Africa, and later returned home expecting their first child. Graham presents this odyssey chronologically, and has included photographs of different people and experiences from his journey.

The book portrays Graham's conflict with nature, contact with other cultures, personal growth, and battles with loneliness in a straightforward, entertaining journal style. In a postscript, there is a very brief reference to the Christian faith that the Grahams feel guides their lives. Teachers should be aware of a few examples of coarse language in the book.

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Publishers, 1991
Harper Perennial edition
[original 1972]
199 pages

ISBN 0-06-092047-5

FISH HOUSE SECRETS

Kathy Stinson

In ***Fish House Secrets***, Chad and his father arrive at his Nova Scotia grandparent's house, and it is here where Chad mourns and accepts his mother's death. He meets Jill, a Halifax runaway, and while helping her elude the authorities, Chad comes to terms with his own grief, guilt and rebellion. References to emerging sexuality and abortion reveal empathy for others and are dealt with sensitively.

Chad and Jill have typical teenage actions and characteristics, but their portrayals go beyond stereotyping. The clashing of youth and parents, the need to assert oneself, the need to communicate, the need for self-esteem and the need for independence are some of the discussion topics that this book should generate. The novel's style, using inner chapters, reveals both Chad's and Jill's personal struggles and their willingness to forgive and begin again. It could be used either for small group discussion or for full class study.

> *"I say, 'my dad's a nice guy. I just wish he'd give me a little space, that's all.' 'Parents don't like to do that unless you make them,' Ian says, and sounds like he knows what he's talking about. If he's taken a job that gets him away from home for six weeks I guess he does. I have to admire his doing that, like some part of me admires the nerve of that girl hiding in our barn, asking me to feed her, then just—moving on."* p. 60

Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown
Press Ltd., 1993
[original 1992]

ISBN 1895449103

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Paul Brickhill

> *"There's one thing we've got to keep in mind. Glemnitz doesn't know how many tunnels there are or how advanced they are, and he won't have the faintest idea everything is so organized. He mustn't get to thinking it's anything more than a little effort of a few blokes. If he does, he'll turn the whole bloody camp inside out. He mustn't find anything more." p. 89*

The Great Escape is a suspenseful and spine-chilling thriller in which a World War II POW tells how more than six hundred British and American air force officers escaped from Stalag Luft III. Under cunning leadership, these prisoners outsmarted, even manipulated, their Nazi captors into unwittingly assisting them in their escape; which was made possible through persistence, camaraderie, humour and the coordination of a multitude of talents. The author follows the experiences of key individuals through to eventual escape or death, and includes the later war trials and the sentencing of the Nazi officers who ran the stalag.

The book is written in short chapters full of action and adventure. Brickhill inserts sketches of the compound, equipment used in the escape, maps and drawings. He uses technical vocabulary when describing the construction and excavation of the tunnels. Even though this book was written just five years after the war ended, Brickhill remains fairly objective in his portrayal of prison life. He writes with a sense of excitement, a touch of humour and dwells on the enormity of the task rather than the daily drudgery of living in a prison.

New York, NY: Fawcett Crest
Books, 1978
[original 1950]

ISBN 0449237176

HATCHET

Gary Paulsen

The engaging story of ***Hatchet*** unfolds as 13-year-old Brian Robson flies to visit his father in the Canadian wilderness. The pilot of the plane dies from a massive heart attack. Brian crash-lands the plane in a remote lake and survives a two-month ordeal with only a hatchet, a few camping skills, and his instinct for survival.

This action-packed adventure offers plot detail and character development. Students should be interested in the physical and emotional growth of Brian, as well as his ability to cope with insurmountable odds.

Brian's fragmented thinking is juxtaposed with the narrator's sequential descriptions. This style of writing will be highly appealing to many readers. The novel is an easy read, but can provide interesting discussions in small group or full class situations. Gary Paulsen's autobiography *Guts* is included in the Grade 7 list.

> *"And a watch. He had a digital watch still on his wrist but it was broken from the crash—the little screen blank—and he took it off and almost threw it away but stopped the hand motion and lay the watch on the grass with the rest of it. There. That was it. No, wait. One other thing. Those were all the things he had, but he also had himself. Perpich used to drum that into them—'You are the most valuable asset. Don't forget that. You are the best thing you have.'" p. 51*

Toronto, ON: Puffin Books,
1988
[original 1987]

ISBN 014032724X

Awards:

Newbery Honor Book, 1988

HUNTER IN THE DARK

Monica Hughes

> *"They loved him. They wanted to protect him, but he couldn't let them do that any more. When he got back he was going to have to be strong enough to find a way past his own fear to his parents' fear for him, and somehow cancel that out. Could he do it? Could they find a new way of being close and truthful? He could sure as hell try, though it wasn't going to be easy."*
> *pp. 53–54*

New York, NY: Avon Books,
1984
[original 1982]

ISBN 0380677024

Awards:

Alberta Culture Juvenile Novel Award, 1981

Canada Council prize for children's literature, 1982

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1983

Young Adult Canadian Book Award, 1983

In ***Hunter in the Dark***, 16-year-old Mike Rankin comes to terms with himself, his family and his fear of death. The author develops relationships and conflicts through a rapidly-moving plot with realistic characters and dialogue. The survival theme is developed through the goal of taking one more hunting trip.

Tact and delicacy should be used in dealing with the mortality theme in this novel as many students have some personal knowledge of someone who has, or had, a terminal illness. The family's attitude of denial in this story may mirror the students' own experiences. This novel could facilitate discussions leading to creative writing and/or research.

IN THE LAND OF WHITE DEATH: AN EPIC STORY OF SURVIVAL IN THE SIBERIAN ARCTIC

Valerian Albanov

In the Land of the White Death is an engaging true account of the *Saint Anna*, a Russian ship that became frozen for a year-and-a-half in the Kora Sea in 1912. The author and 13 other crew members finally made sledges and kayaks and set out for Franz Josef Land. This straightforwardly written thirteen-chapter book is a suspenseful, gripping diary written in the first person by one of the survivors. It tells a typical but amazing survival narrative, with humans overcoming isolation and seemingly impossible odds. The ship had inadequate provisions, an incompetent commander and inaccurate mapping. Over the course of the 18-month disaster, the crew members faced sub-zero temperatures, scurvy, starvation, blizzards, collapsing ice floes, wild animal attacks, snow blindness and rebellion. Although most of the crew eventually perished from starvation or hypothermia, Albanov persisted and finally found help.

The book includes a preface written by Jon Krakauer, as well as maps and photos to illustrate different aspects of the odyssey. Students might use a problem-solution approach in discussing or writing about the experiences of the crew. The epilogue suggests some further research possibilities for Internet or library explorations.

> *"Why had I come to this frozen wilderness on the edge of an icy sea, when the weather was so beautiful in the sunny lands to the south? What madness! ... But what good would complaining do? All this torture is simply deserved retribution. One should not poke one's nose into places where Nature does not want the presence of man."*
> *p. 45*

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada, 2001
Modern Library Paperback
edition
[original 1917]
243 pages

ISBN 0–679–68361–X

LYDDIE

Katherine Paterson

> *"She has me. Oh Charlie, I ain't perfect, but I do my best. Can't you see? I done my best for you. She's all I got left now. How can I let her go? But even as she stormed within herself, she knew she had no choice. Like the rusty blade through her heart she felt it. If she stays here with me, she will die."*
> *p. 143*

Set in the United States during the Industrial Revolution, ***Lyddie*** is a story of unions and personal courage. It follows Lyddie, a young girl who goes to work in the garment factories where she learns to weave and read—thereby finding her future. Lyddie's struggle for independence, for her rights as a woman, and for her rights as a factory worker, reflect the social conditions of that time.

The novel should encourage interesting discussions on character development, on the conflict between right and wrong, and on the value of education. Gender references, and the treatment of the birth of a child out of wedlock according to the social mores of the 1800s, are also potential topics. Some students might be interested in researching the emergence of unions and women's rights.

While the topic is universal, students may wish to consider the changing roles of women and examine the issues of women's rights today.

Toronto, ON: Puffin Books, 1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 0140349812

Awards:

International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) Honor Book, 1994

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Katherine Paterson*, 1999 [21 min. BPN 2075908].

NEVER CRY WOLF

Farley Mowat

In his fictional narrative, ***Never Cry Wolf***, Farley Mowat embarks on a mission to investigate claims about the wolves' role in the diminishing caribou population. Isolated in the frozen tundra among howling wolf packs, Mowat develops a respect and admiration for these animals. The narrative is developed with humorous recollections of encounters between man and animal. In his journal, Mowat writes of observations, enlightened feelings and lonely encounters with the wolves. His findings conclude that the wolves have been wrongfully blamed for the destruction of other animals in the North.

This deceptively simple narrative with its humorous details provides another perspective about an animal that has been falsely maligned. The appeal of this book is in its presentation, simplicity and anecdotal recording.

"He was lying down, evidently resting after his mournful singsong, and his nose was about six feet from mine. We stared at one another in silence. I do not know what went on in his massive skull, but my head was full of the most disturbing thoughts. I was peering straight into the amber gaze of a fully grown arctic wolf, who probably weighed more than I did, and who was certainly a lot better versed in close-combat techniques than I would ever be." p. 36

Toronto, ON: McClelland-
Bantam, Inc., 1979
[original 1963]

ISBN 0770421377

ON THE LINES

Ron Finn (with David Boyd)

> *"I fell hard and I'm thankful that I didn't break anything, but my legs, knees, and my back were sore for weeks. I was dazed for a few seconds because I didn't know what had hit me, but when I turned and realized it was Mason ... well, I was ready to go! All I wanted was a clean shot. That's when Andy stepped in and got Manson off the ice for the second and last time."*
> *pp. 112–113*

In ***On the Lines***, Ron Finn tells a story of hockey from another point of view—that of a linesman in the National Hockey League. After he realizes he will not make the "big" league as a player, Finn begins to take up officiating. As a linesman, he is able to relate many important hockey incidents from the best view in the house. Finn's love of hockey has continued throughout his life. To him, hockey is a part of Canadian culture and tradition, and he displays a positive outlook toward life and people through his association with hockey.

This book will appeal to any student who has a strong interest in sports. Finn talks of not only the hockey players from the 1970s and 1980s, but also of others who are behind the "stars." He reinforces the view that, in order for a sport to continue at any level, there must be more than the "stars."

Coarse language is used in the book, but it is an easy read and will appeal to students interested in hockey. The foreword is written by Wayne Gretzky. Individual or small group study would be effective and could lead to research in areas such as hockey biographies, aspects of the National Hockey League, media in sports, violence in sports, and careers in sports.

Oakville, ON: Rubicon
Publishing Inc., 1993

ISBN 0921156464

THE PEARL

John Steinbeck

The Pearl tells the story of a Mexican pearl diver, Kino, and his wife who discover a valuable pearl. To Kino, this prize symbolizes comfort, security, health and happiness; and his dreams become larger and more urgent. Three attempts are made on Kino's life as thieves try to steal the pearl. Desperation and greed alter the lives of all who covet the wealth of the pearl.

In this novel, Steinbeck captures the ethnic flavour of this Mexican family, using a smooth-flowing style; many references reflect the rich musical heritage of the people. Detailed descriptions of the land and sea are presented.

The main characters are representative of human frailties. The structure is conducive to plot mapping, and the study of symbols, conflict and character. The novel can be used easily for either small group or individual study.

> *"Kino had found the Pearl of the World. The essence of the pearl mixed with essence of mean and a curious dark residue was precipitated. Every man suddenly became related to Kino's pearl, and Kino's pearl went into the dreams, speculations, the schemes, the plans, the futures, the wishes, the needs, the lusts, the hungers, of everyone, and only one person stood in the way and that was Kino, so that he became curiously every man's enemy." p. 23*

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1947
[original 1945]

ISBN 0670545759

THE ROAD TO CHLIFA

Michèle Marineau
(Translated by Susan Ouriou)

> *"Glancing up, I saw Karim, on his feet, looking totally shattered. There was nothing left of cold indifference in him. In his eyes were rage, horror, fear, but mostly terrible sadness. That's when I understood that the newcomer wasn't haughty or disdainful like some said. He was simply in despair." p. 24*

The Road to Chlifa is a heartbreaking tale of what many young people in war-torn areas of the world face. It is midyear when Karim, a handsome Lebanese youth, registers in a Quebec high school. Right from the start, he attracts attention and seems to polarize factions. After living in a country torn by war, where bombs and bullets and land mines are part of daily existence, his life in Montreal should be easy, but Karim feels out of place and haunted by the memories of his horrible journey to Chlifa. When Karim discovers other students trying to take advantage of another newcomer during a ski outing, Karim is enraged. He attacks the students, ends up being knifed and almost loses his life.

The reasons for Karim's anger become apparent when, in a lengthy flashback, the story of his life in Lebanon is revealed. His family had already left for Montreal, but Karim remained in Beirut to continue school and experienced the civil war in Lebanon. Finally, Karim makes a treacherous journey through the mountains to Chlifa. There, he finds safety but not without a tremendous price: the life of a young girl he is travelling with.

The story unfolds in a variety of narrative voices: Karim's journal entries, a first-person account by a girl in Karim's high school in Quebec, and third-person narration in the flashback to Lebanon. Students will need some background material about Lebanon and reasons for the civil war. The language and violence is hard hitting but credible, in the context of both the war in Lebanon and the locker rooms of a high school. The book emphasizes friendship, courage and the freedoms enjoyed in Canada compared to the homelands of some students.

Calgary, AB: Northern Lights
Young Novels
Red Deer College Press, 1995
[original 1992]

ISBN 0–88995–129–2

SPEAK

Laurie Halse Anderson

Speak is a painful but redemptive young adult novel about a Grade 9 student suppressing and eventually dealing with the trauma of a rape. The narrator, Melinda Sordino, is a high school freshman who is struggling in school and feels like an outsider. Gradually the reader learns the reason for her depression and withdrawal: during the summer she was raped by another student. In the ending, she finally confronts her attacker, thereby learning to stand up for herself and to become more self-empowered. Melinda's final character change is inspiring and progressive; she finds her literal and figurative voice and learns to "speak" up against what is wrong and unjust.

This gritty, realistic book will have an empathetic resonance for many female readers, especially those struggling in school. Overall, it is an easy read—episodic, and gripping. It is written in short descriptive paragraphs with some sections set up as dialogue suitable for reading aloud. Teens are realistically portrayed and students will likely want to discuss and write about Melinda's experiences as compared with their own.

"We fall into clans: Jocks. Country Clubbers. Idiot Savants. Cheerleaders. Human Waste. Eurotrash. Future Fascists of America. Bit Hair Chix. the Marthas. Suffering Artists. Thespians. Goths. Shredders. I am clanless." p. 4

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.,
2001
Puffin Books edition
[original 1999]
198 pages

ISBN 0-14-131088-X

TERRY FOX: *HIS STORY*

Leslie Scrivener

> *"He told them people could get cancer and die from it and still be winners. He told them he would never be called a quitter. Then he repeated a couple of sentences that made a few of the audience feel uneasy .... 'If I stop,' he said, 'it's because something's happened. I'm in bed but I'm still going to think of myself as a winner.'*
> *He knew just how good it felt to give."*
> *p. 128*

Terry Fox: **His Story** is Leslie Scrivener's sensitive account of the Marathon of Hope based on Terry Fox's personal diary of the journey. The book begins by describing Terry's first day of the cross-Canada run and then fills in his background. He was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma just after entering university. The amputation of his leg, and subsequent drug treatment, terminated Terry's studies but did not dampen his determination to conquer his illness. His personal pledge to run across Canada was the result. In four and a half months, Terry ran two-thirds of the distance before he was again stricken with cancer. His run was given national news coverage and raised 18.5 million dollars for cancer research. Since his death on June 28, 1981 Canadians have continued to raise funds in his memory.

Scrivener follows Terry's diary closely, quoting him directly in journalistic style and filling in details of the run from her own observations and from interviews with Terry, his brother Doug, friends, family and roadside observers. The story is an objective account of one of Canada's modern heroes, and concludes with an epilogue written by Terry.

Terry Fox is portrayed as a man determined to reach his goal. This universal theme contributes to a reader's knowledge and understanding of self. The book is enjoyable and thought-provoking, eliciting an emotional response from all who read it.

Toronto, ON: McClelland and
Stewart Limited, 1981

ISBN 0771080174

WAR OF THE EAGLES

Eric Walters

🍁

War of the Eagles is set in World War II on the West Coast of Canada. This young adult novel is about an Aboriginal youth, Jed, who is torn between loyalty to his country or his Japanese–Canadian friend. While his father is away flying fighter planes in Europe, Jed and his mother work at the nearby military base. Jed's world is shaken when his best friend Tandashi and his family, along with all the other Japanese–Canadians in the community, are declared enemies by the government and sent away to detention camps.

The theme of Walters' book is about choosing what one personally believes is right. This is symbolized through Jed's release of a bald eagle that was being contained on the military base after he and Tandashi nursed it back to health.

War of the Eagles is an appropriate, balanced text for presenting racial and cultural conflicts. This readable coming-of-age novel will have a special appeal to students from Asian–Canadian, Aboriginal–Canadian or military families. It provides a reasonable critical reading challenge with respect to character, conflict, theme and symbolism.

> *"'You got to remember my people feel like that eagle chained out to your flagpole. We've had so much taken away: so much that belonged to us is gone, forever.' There was a pause, a long pause. 'Now, all that seems left to some of them is to snap and claw and fight. Like the eagle.'" p. 93*

Victoria, BC:
Orca Book Publishers, 2000
[original 1998]
224 pages

ISBN 1–55143–118–1

WHITEOUT

James Houston

> *"They broke and flung away the wind-packed chunks of snow, then using all their strength heaved back the snow-laden bearskin. Jon jumped with fright when the small gray bitch that led the team scrambled out of Panee's arms. They lifted the girl from her gravelike shelter." p. 187*

Jonathan Aird, the protagonist of ***Whiteout***, is a rebellious and fatherless 17-year-old city boy who is sent to a remote Arctic settlement on Baffin Island to fulfill his community work requirements as part of a rehabilitation program. Jonathan must come to terms with the harsh reality of the environment. While doing so, he matures and learns to accept responsibility for his actions.

Jonathan's self-discovery is paralleled by his initial stereotyping of the Inuit and his final understanding of their ways. As he learns to admire their strength and courage, he develops into a mature young man. A strong emphasis on action and plot is highlighted by accurate descriptions of life in the Arctic.

The story contains characters of Scottish, Inuit and Polish origins, and these individuals are portrayed in traditional/stereotyped roles. Inuit religious beliefs are presented and the novel provides an empathetic look at Inuit culture, thus demonstrating a need for acceptance and understanding.

Toronto, ON: General
Paperbacks, 1991
[original 1988]

ISBN 0773673458

WHY SHOOT THE TEACHER?

Max Braithwaite

In ***Why Shoot the Teacher?***, Braithwaite writes about his first year of teaching in a small school district during the Dirty Thirties. He talks, in a series of light and humorous anecdotes, of the Depression years and the people who survived them. His experiences with school dances, Christmas concerts and political rallies present a good description of social activities in rural Saskatchewan.

The author's style is direct. He creates a concise set of episodes that facilitate easily organizable units for classroom discussion. The vocabulary is medium range. The point of view is that of an insecure, self-doubting young man who encounters employment, meager subsistent living, and poverty on the prairies. The book is recommended, not only for its historical perspective, but also for its readability and humour.

> *"I was up before daylight to stoke my fire and, after eating, went up to the schoolroom and looked out the window. The wind hadn't reached its full force. I could still see the barn, but beyond that was a grey mass of swirling snow. No children would show up today. I knew, because this had the look of a two- or three-day blow. There was enough water in the cooler to last a couple of days, if I didn't wash, but the prospect of being with myself for that long made me sick to the stomach."*
> *pp. 128–129*

Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1965

ISBN 0771015992

YULETIDE BLUES

R. P. MacIntyre

> *"It's one thing when you find out something about your friends that you don't particularly want to know, but it's a different thing again when you find out something about yourself that you don't particularly want to know." p. 99*

Yuletide Blues begins when Lanny, a young hockey player, plans to stay with his favourite aunt while his parents are on holidays. Before their departure, this aunt, an artistic eccentric, attempts suicide and Lanny must go to a reclusive great-aunt's place. During his stay, he breaks his leg, and discovers that his best friend has become a thief. Lanny comes to terms with individual differences and deals with the emotional, physical and psychological limitations of both aunts.

Students can easily relate to this episodic, humorous story that should lead to excellent class discussion and personal reflection on issues, such as delinquency, sexuality, aging, depression, loneliness, personal responsibility and peer pressure. The teenage vernacular will be appealing to students as well. Because the novel contains some swearing and references to sexuality and suicide, the book might best be offered for either small group or individual study.

Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown
Press Ltd., 1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 1895449049

Z FOR ZACHARIAH

Robert C. O'Brien

In ***Z for Zachariah***, sixteen-year-old Ann Burden believes she is the last survivor of an atomic war. She has subsisted by eating "safe" food from the nearby village store, farming her father's land as best she can, and keeping her sanity by writing a diary. The discovery of another individual, Loomis, leads to doubt and confusion, resulting in an escape from the comfortable valley. The conclusion amplifies Ann's courage and desire for self-preservation.

The narrative is straightforward, the vocabulary terse, and the structure chronological. Students should be able to comprehend the actions of the characters and go beyond the plot to understand the emotions that Ann describes so well in her diary. This novel can provide for interesting discussions regarding speculative fiction.

> *"'Except for this valley the rest of the world, as far as we know, is dangerous and uninhabited. I don't know how long its going to be that way—maybe forever.'*
> *'But as long as it is, the suit is the only way to go out there and stay alive.' ...*
> *'...we've got to plan as if this valley is the whole world, and we are starting a colony, one that will last permanently.'"*
> *pp. 150–152*

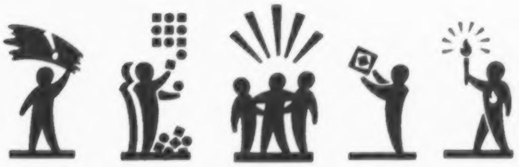
New York, NY: Dell
Publishing Co., Inc., 1974

ISBN 0440999014

20-1

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction
Annotated List



AN AMERICAN CHILDHOOD

Annie Dillard

An American Childhood focuses on the memories of Annie Dillard's childhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dillard particularly focuses on the nuances of her growing up that bring meaning and beauty to youth. Her writing style, which is simple and direct, paints clear and vivid accounts of her youth, and provides an excellent model for detailed student personal writing.

Do not be deceived by the word "American" in the title. This is a collection that transcends national boundaries and can easily be used, understood and enjoyed by Canadian students. Many of Dillard's memories are common to Canadian youth and should offer insight and delight. In particular, Dillard's accounts of winter in Pittsburgh should ring true for Canadians.

The author's partisan views of the wars between the Natives and Caucasians as childhood memories are based upon the literature of the times that she read as a child. There is some stereotyping of Natives in these sections. As well, Dillard reveals her childhood anti-Catholic bias. These issues of stereotyping and negative images should be critically examined by students during this nonfiction study. *An American Childhood* may be most appropriate for individual or small group study.

> *"The things in the world did not necessarily cause my overwhelming feelings; the feelings were inside me, beneath my skin, behind my ribs, within my skull. They were even, to some extent, under my control. I could be connected to the outer world by reason, if I chose, or I could yield to what amounted to a narrative fiction, to a tale of terror whispered to me by the blood in my ears...."* p. 22

New York, NY: Harper & Row,
Publishers 1988
[original 1987]

ISBN 0060915188

Awards:

National Book Critics Circle Award nomination, 1987

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF DUDDY KRAVITZ

Mordecai Richler

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz traces Duddy's important relationships with his grandfather, Simcha; his father, Mack the Hack; his French-Canadian girlfriend, Yvette; the "Boy Wonder," Jerry Dingleman; his brother, Lennie; his friend, Vergil, and some other characters. Even before Duddy leaves high school, his every action is motivated by the need to acquire enough money to buy land. During his first summer job as a waiter in a posh Laurentian hotel he sights a piece of resort property he covets and, throughout the novel, uses any method to obtain money to purchase this land. Much of the comedy is situational and satirical, with the dialogue in colloquial, often coarse language. Duddy's use of a more formal and correct style, including his change of name to Duddy Kane, is reserved for situations when he is "wheeling and dealing." Richler develops the novel as satirical comedy, directed not only against the culture, setting and characters of the novel, but also Duddy's actions must be analyzed in the light of any individual who is totally devoted to rising above his own social station. Some students may have difficulty comprehending Duddy's single-mindedness, his motivation and drive at the age of 17, but the plot movement and character schemes sweep readers along, if only to find out who Duddy will "con" next.

> *"Duddy Kravitz believed what his grandfather had told him: a man without land is nobody. He set his heart on land, and if he made himself hated along the way...he couldn't care less."* p. 43

Harmondsworth, England:
Penguin Books, 1964
[original 1959]

ISBN 0140021795

BARONETER RISING

Hugh MacLennan

> *"Thank you Angus. For two years my family has been insinuating that if Neil had faced a court-martial he'd have been shot. In that event, presumably, Father's military career would have marched gloriously on, and he'd not be in Halifax now. They don't mean to persecute me, but that's what they'll never allow me to forget. If Neil had been convicted before he was killed, Father would have been freed to all official responsibility for the failure."* p. 37

Set in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1917, ***Barometer Rising*** is a story of entrapment and colonization. The focus of the novel is as much on the city as it is on its inhabitants. This work is a study of catastrophe: the explosion of the ship Mont Blanc in the Halifax Harbour, the burning of the city, and the raging blizzard that followed. The elements of earth, fire and water purge the city as well as the novel's characters. Havoc by nature is paralleled to the distant destruction of World War I and the more immediate personal plights of the characters.

The lives of Penelope Wain and Neil Macrae are the centre of the character study. Presumed dead by Penelope, Neil returns home to reveal the truth about his military action overseas. The lovers are reunited only hours before the Halifax explosion occurs.

The graphic description of physical devastation is balanced by minute details of character study. Halifax is symbolically reflected in the strong but isolated characters. Occasionally, the language used is graphic and may be considered offensive by some.

The time frame of the novel is short. The story begins Sunday, December 2 and ends Monday, December 10, 1917. The events of these eight days provide a window through which we view the years that bring the characters and culture to this precise historical moment. The work is an investigation of how time is both arrested and accelerated by catastrophe. The city is levelled, and the novel closes with the suggestion that new life and hope will be built from ruin.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1989
[original 1941]

ISBN 0771099916

A BIRD IN THE HOUSE

Margaret Laurence

A Bird in the House is a collection of closely connected short stories set in the small Manitoba town of Manawaka in the 1930s and '40s. Each story presents an episode in the growing awareness and maturity of Vanessa MacLeod, from the age of 6 to about 20. The same family characters appear and reappear: on her father's side the Connors, dominated by the uncompromising patriarch Grandfather Connor; on her mother's side the MacLeods and the gentler but equally unyielding Grandmother MacLeod. Amongst them they present a vivid picture of the Scottish–Irish protestant values that pioneered the West and can still be detected today. In many of the stories Vanessa sees herself rebelling against her grandfather, but in maturity, comes to recognize, reluctantly, that she is his "monument."

> *"No human work could be applied. The lake was not lonely or untamed. These words relate to people, and there was nothing of people here. There was no feeling about the place. I looked at the grey reaches of it and felt threatened. It was like the view of God which I had held since my father's death. Distant, indestructible, totally indifferent." p. 138*

Margaret Laurence has identified this work as being "semi-autobiographical." The young Vanessa, who plans to be a writer, records with shrewd observation, sympathy and humour the tensions within the family. Vanessa, like Laurence in her growing years in a small prairie town during the Depression, develops "the sight of her own particular eyes."

Each story is well-crafted and can be studied separately, with focus on the use of narrative voice, character development, irony, symbolism and theme. The book can also be read as a whole as a varied chronicle of a girl's growing up, with the opportunity for individual or small group presentation on how each story contributes to the total impression.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1989
[original 1963]

ISBN 0771099851

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Aldous Huxley

> *"'But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin'*
>
> *'In fact,' said Mustapha Mond, 'you're claiming the right to be unhappy.'*
>
> *'All right then,' said the Savage defiantly. 'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'"*
> *p. 240*

A few hundred years into the future, a ***Brave New World*** has been established in which science reigns supreme. Reproduction, from fertilization of the egg to birth and after, is a laboratory process. Workers are mass-produced according to specifications. Family life, and its related emotional involvements, are forbidden. However, in New Mexico, an area of primitive culture is kept for scientific study. There, a young man is found who is the offspring of a forbidden alliance between two visiting research workers. The young man is a "savage," self-educated with the aid of an old copy of Shakespeare's plays. As an experiment, the young man and his mother are brought to London, where the mother dies shortly thereafter. The son, appalled by a society that stifles all beauty and all humanistic endeavour, eventually commits suicide.

Rather than merely a story of human beings living in a world of the future, the book is an examination of that world. The reader's attention is directed to the mechanical and philosophical aspects of the society. Appreciation of such a society requires an understanding of satire. Discussion could centre on such topics as the importance of the arts and humanities to the quality of human life; the problems arising from the artificial and controlled propagation of the species; the breakup of family life; the use of drugs; promiscuous sexuality; government control.

This novel requires teacher assistance to guide most students to an understanding and appreciation of the specific elements of Huxley's moral satire.

New York, NY: Harper and
Row, 1969
[original 1932]

ISBN 0060830956

CAT'S CRADLE

Kurt Vonnegut

Cat's Cradle is narrated by a young American writer named Jonah, who is collecting material for a book to be called The Day the World Ended (the day the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima). His research takes him to the fictional and fantastic Caribbean republic of San Lorenzo, where he is caught up in events that lead to the end of the world. The end, however, is not fire, but ice. And the agent of destruction is "ice-nine," which alters molecular structures and locks all moisture into rigidity. This rigid misapplication of science produces a world in which people cannot choose to be human; they choose, instead, to die.

The combination of science fiction, fantasy, comedy, satire, and a deliberately choppy narrative, make it difficult on a first reading to see the moral and spiritual values that Vonnegut is asserting. Some readers may misinterpret the novel as satirizing all organized religion.

Nevertheless, Vonnegut's novel is a comedy, not a tragedy. The author's humour and playfulness permeate the novel, although the humour is sometimes grim and sardonic, and the playfulness can be bizarre and fantastic. The tone is not pessimistic or despairing. Critical satire, particularly of technology, is combined with a sympathetic treatment of humanity's strengths and weaknesses.

> *"And Castle nodded sagely. 'So this is a picture of the meaninglessness of it all! I couldn't agree more.'*
> *'Do you really agree?' I asked. 'A minute ago you said something about Jesus.'*
> *'Who?' said Castle.*
> *'Jesus Christ?'*
> *'Oh.' said Castle.*
> *'Him.' He shrugged.*
> *'People have to talk about something just to keep their voice boxes in working order, so they'll have good voice boxes in case there's ever anything really meaningful to say.'"*
> *p. 140*

New York, NY: Dell
Publishing Company, 1974
[original 1963]

ISBN 0440511496

DEATH ON THE ICE: THE GREAT NEWFOUNDLAND SEALING DISASTER OF 1914

Cassie Brown (with Harold Horwood)

> *"In all, thirty-four men turned back. As the break between the two parties widened, many others in the column wavered. Even the youngsters were beginning to lose their nerve, seeing their weather-wise elders so uneasy. But Cecile Mouland was astonished that they should even think of turning back. 'A cowardly thing to do!' he declared and firmly believed that it was. Still murmuring about the weather, they went on."* p. 76

In ***Death on the Ice***, Cassie Brown documents the 1914 Newfoundland disaster in which a series of blunders, and some callous misjudgements resulted in the deaths of 78 sealers. This "investigative journalism" is based on a meticulous study of primary sources, such as newspapers, court records, transcripts and interviews. Maps and photographs are provided for clarification.

The author reveals an underlying sympathy with the sealers, who are treated with indifference by their skippers and by ship owners who are concerned only with profit. A new perspective is provided on the whole topic of sealing: the men are the victims, not the seals. It is debatable whether or not students will be able to see this irony, but they might be encouraged to do some similar research into the conflicting sides of a public concern, or into similar current problems in Newfoundland and the Maritime provinces.

The dramatic qualities of the account override the amount of historical detail. The dialect used should present no problem to the average reader.

Toronto, ON: Doubleday
Canada Limited, 1974
[original 1972]

ISBN 0385050372

DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT

Anne Tyler

Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant opens as Pearl, on her deathbed, contemplates her life. Abandoned by her husband in 1944, Pearl Tull raises their three children on her own. Her reveries are the framework for the plot line that follows each of the children through childhood to adulthood. The connections made and paths followed by each reveal obsessions, hates and passions, which are rooted in the life of the family. These elements have affected decisions made by the characters, and the ways in which they have influenced each other, as well as others who have entered their lives. Jenny is strong, deliberate and controlled in her goals and self-discipline but cannot deal with the emotional issues of her relationships. Cody is obsessed by the drive to be economically successful, to control and manipulate but is never able to be satisfied or to curb his personal jealousies. Ezra, the unwitting hub of the family, is driven by an obsession to mold the Tulls into the perfect family. Characterization is strong and deliberate, and the emotional isolation of each is believable in spite of the eccentricity of the Tulls.

The writing is straightforward and the flashback technique is effectively used. The tone is bittersweet and invites the inquiring mind to search for motive and consequence in the obvious dysfunction of this family.

> *"Why did Ezra go on trying?*
>
> *Why did the rest of them go on showing up, was more to the point.*
>
> *In fact, they probably saw more of each other than happy families did. It was almost as if what they couldn't get right, they had to keep returning to. (So if they ever did finish a dinner, would they rise and say goodbye forever after?)"* pp. 154–155

New York, NY: Ivy Books,
1992
[original 1982]

ISBN 080410882X

Awards:

PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction, 1983

Pulitzer Prize nomination for fiction, 1983

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Robert Louis Stevenson

"... all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil." p. 84

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde provoked sermons and scandals in the past and continues to be an intriguing, relevant morality tale for modern times. Henry Jekyll is a respectable Edinburgh doctor whose experiments with the unknown transform him into the notorious Edward Hyde, an antisocial criminal alter-ego. The story is told from the perspective of Mr. Utterson, a lawyer who becomes entangled in the situation after one of his clients is murdered and Hyde is suspected. Eventually Utterson learns that Jekyll has invented a drug that separates the good and evil within him, purifying the doctor himself but also causing periods as the monstrous Hyde.

Stevenson's presentation of the dual nature of humankind, and the relationship between reality and illusion, make this a worthy alternative or supplement to *Tragedy of Macbeth* or *Lord of the Flies.* Though Stevenson employs semicolons, longer sentences, and unfamiliar vocabulary, the mystery, suspense, pacing, and the book's relative brevity make it compulsively readable to the climax and denouement.

Teachers should discuss the book's religious references within their historical context and ask students to critically examine the references to violence and other sensitive issues. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* lends itself well to critical and creative assignments such as video-making, collages, imagined unsent letters, and trading cards.

Toronto, ON:
Bantam Books, 2002
[original 1886]
128 pages

ISBN 0–553–21277–X

ETHAN FROME

Edith Wharton

Ethan Frome is a tragic love story set in a wintry and bleak New England. It is told by an observer who comes into the community of Starkfield (well-named) twenty years after the events and is curious about Ethan Frome. Local residents tell him what they know, and the story is retold of Ethan's suppressed love for Mattie, a young cousin of his sickly wife, Zena. Their love is initially unspoken, deeply felt, but hopeless. Eventually, desperate at the thought of losing each other, they attempt suicide on a toboggan run. The ironic ending is suggested by the narrator at the start, but the reader is still kept in suspense throughout.

Ethan Frome is a novel with an almost perfect, seamless form and with a deceptively simple but very evocative style. It is very short and easy to read, but requires a fairly mature reader who can appreciate the narrative and descriptive skills, as well as Wharton's keen psychological revealing of character. It is excellent for the teaching of narrative techniques, particularly novel structure and economical character delineation. It would be interesting as part of a thematic unit on choices or the sense of identity.

> *"With the sudden perception of the point to which his madness had carried him, the madness fell and he saw his life before him as it was. He was a poor man, the husband of a sickly woman, whom his desertion would leave alone and destitute; and even if he had had the heart to desert her he could have done so only by deceiving two kindly people who had pitied him." p. 118*

New York, NY: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1970
[original 1911]

ISBN 0684174871

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
(The Lord of the Rings, Part 1)

J. R. R. Tolkien

> *"With a terrible cry the Balrog fell forward, and its shadow plunged down and vanished. But even as it fell it swung its whip, and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard's knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. 'Fly, you fools!' he cried, and was gone." p. 434*

The Fellowship of the Ring is an archetypal mythological fantasy that is the follow-up to *The Hobbit* and the first book in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Frodo Baggins, a young hobbit, becomes the unwitting keeper of the One Ring, a powerful and evil force. Along with a fellowship of two men, a dwarf, an elf, three other hobbits and the wizard Gandalf, Frodo must begin a monumental quest to travel across middle-earth to destroy the ring and end Dark Lord Sauron's rule. The book includes a prologue that gives background to the tale and maps of places relevant to the plot.

The book is a rich presentation of the quest motif as well as a study of power and corruption and the need for cooperation in overcoming evil. Many readers will enjoy the imaginative exoticness of this fantasy, its fascinating creatures and powerful scenes. Teachers will find numerous possibilities for creative work and comparison of Tolkien's book to similar works of literature and film.

London, England:
HarperCollins Publishers, 1994
[original 1954]
535 pages

ISBN 0-00-714921-2

FIFTH BUSINESS

Robertson Davies

Fifth Business begins, "My lifelong involvement with Mrs. Dempster began at 5:58 o'clock p.m. on 27 December 1908, at which time I was ten years and seven months old." This richly comic, offbeat novel chronicles Dunstable Ramsey's lifelong journey into the inner realms of hagiography, magic, guilt, psychology, religion and the theatre. The story begins in Deptford, a small village in turn-of-the-century Ontario. An errant snowball thrown at Dunstable causes Mary Dempster to slip on the ice, go into labour, and deliver her son Paul 80 days early, which in turn causes her to "go-simple." Since the snowball was aimed at him, Dunstable develops a lifelong sense of guilt, which he tries to absolve by proving Mrs. Dempster to be a true saint.

The story follows Dunstable through childhood, World War I, his teaching post at a private boy's school and on various journeys around the world studying saints, and the dual world of history and legend. As well, much of the novel focuses on his relationship with his "lifelong friend and enemy" Boy Staunton. It is paradoxes such as this that Davies uses, not only to develop plot and character, but to reveal several of his themes.

There are two scenes of a sexual nature in this novel, which serve as vehicles in developing Dunstable's character. One occurs in his youth when he discovers Mrs. Dempster and a tramp copulating in the local gravel pit; the second occurs late in his life when he is seduced by the hideously beautiful Liesl.

"The saint triumphs over sin. Yes, but most of us cannot do that, and because we love the saint and want him to be more like ourselves, we attribute some imperfection to him. ... Mankind cannot endure perfection; it stifles him. He demands that even the saints should cast a shadow. If they, these holy ones who have lived so greatly but who still carry their shadows with them, can approach God, well then, there is hope for the worst of us."
pp. 172–173

Toronto, ON: Penguin
Books Canada Ltd., 1977
[original 1970]

ISBN 014004387X

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES AT THE WHISTLE STOP CAFE

Fannie Flagg

> *"Come to think of it, Idgie and Ruth bought the cafe in 1929, right in the height of the Depression, but I don't think we ever had margarine there. Leastways, I cain't recall if we did. It's odd, here the whole world was suffering so, but at the cafe, those Depression years come back to me now as the happy times, even though we were all struggling. We were happy and didn't know it." p. 318*

The narration of ***Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*** is controlled by Mrs. Threadgoode, a colourful elderly woman who is living in the Rose Terrace Nursing Home in the 1980s. She slowly unravels the history of the people of Whistle Stop, Alabama to Evelyn Couch, an unhappy, middle-aged woman who accompanies her husband on weekly visits to his mother, Big Momma. As the visits and weeks go by, Mrs. Threadgoode tells the story of the two powerful women who ran the Whistle Stop Cafe, a cafe known for fine barbecue, good conversation and fair play. Superimposed on this main plot is the modern dilemma of Evelyn, which is gradually shaped, as she herself is, by the inadvertent influence of Mrs. Threadgoode's storytelling.

Both plots are based on the theme of victimization. The primary plot centres on murder as a result of racial prejudice and sexual inequality in the 1930s; the secondary plot explores contemporary issues of self-discovery and the role of the middle-aged, middle-class woman of the 1980s.

The flashback technique and narration style may cause problems for some students. Flagg deals with interesting but sensitive issues, and the language, which is graphic and racist at times, may offend some readers. Students should critically examine the negative behaviours exhibited by a few characters. There are violent scenes in the novel, but they are necessary to the representation of particular characters and the development of the plot. This novel may be most appropriate for individual or small group study, or offered on an optional basis.

Fannie Flagg writes with strength, humour and poignancy. The important individuals in this novel take responsibility for one another, and in so doing, shape their own lives of integrity and worth.

New York, NY: McGraw-Hill
Book Company, 1988
[original 1987]

ISBN 0070212570

FROZEN IN TIME: UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF THE FRANKLIN EXPEDITION

Owen Beattie and John Geiger

Frozen in Time is an account of the investigative scientific expeditions led by Dr. Owen Beattie, a forensic pathologist at the University of Alberta, to the Arctic grave site of three of the sailors from the doomed Franklin expedition. This 1848 British expedition to find a North-West passage ended in the mysterious disappearance of all 129 crew members. The mystery has aroused speculation for more than a century.

> *"When their food finally ran out, and they were too ravaged by hunger and disease to continue, the men sat down and prepared to die. But with the first death came new hope. The survivors must have found themselves contemplating a stark fact: starvation need not be a factor any more. Cannibalizing the trunk of the body would have given them enough strength to push on." p. 62*

The first four chapters set out background information: the nature and personnel of the Franklin expedition, and the documentation of previous findings. The rest of the book is a painstaking, detailed account of the exhumation of the frozen and well-preserved remains and the subsequent solution of a 133-year-old mystery. Beattie, and a team of Alberta scientists, applied the techniques of physical anthropology to investigate the Franklin remains in the same way that modern forensic science determines the causes of death. Thus, the book combines the elements of a good detective story with history and science.

The account is scientific and the descriptions detailed without approaching the macabre. There may be readers whose fascination is moderated (but more likely increased) by the vivid photographs of the bodies and by the clinical description of autopsy methods, or hints of cannibalism. Further research and study projects should promote lively discussion.

Vancouver, BC: Douglas &
McIntyre, 1992
[original 1987]

ISBN 1550540483

THE GHOST WALKER

R.D. Lawrence

"Even so the moment her body came to rest, the tom landed on it. In swift sequence, as his hind feet came to rest on the animal's back, he reached out with his left forepaw and grabbed the cow's nose, pulling it violently toward himself as he clutched the quarry's neck with his right paw and at the same time sank his fangs into the back of her neck." p. 148

In ***The Ghost Walker***, Lawrence spends ten continuous months observing a cougar in its natural habitat. A naturalist and an environmentalist, he describes his interest in and previous experience of the study of the puma and his decision to settle on a specific territory in the Selkirk mountains for an extended field study. He tells of his preparation for living in isolated territory and details precise observations of many kinds of wildlife: bears, wolverines, porcupines, pack rats.

His eventual discovery of one puma, which he calls Ghost Walker, is followed by a close study of its behaviour and the development, of what Lawrence calls, his own kind of strange, extrasensory ability to communicate with the animal. He describes not only his observations of the puma, but also the gradual intensification of his own senses through isolation and patient concentration.

The work is well-written, easy to read, and has enough suspense and stylistic skill to hold student interest. Lawrence's experiences as a naturalist and writer are evident, and the association between man and animal is not sentimental.

Toronto, ON: HarperCollins
Publishers Ltd., 1991
[original 1983]

ISBN 0006377041

THE GREAT GATSBY

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Nick Carraway, the narrator of ***The Great Gatsby***, moves to New York and rents a home in the Long Island colony of West Egg. From a relatively neutral vantage point, Nick is able to observe the lives of those he encounters. The contrast between poverty and wealth and the struggles to achieve an "American Dream" are depicted through each character.

A reflection of the historical values and morality of the 1930s becomes evident as Nick examines the plight of Gatsby in his pursuit of Daisy, Tom Buchanan's wife, Tom Buchanan's adultery, the escapades in New York, and the adherence to the superficial values of riches and self-gratification. Despondent by what he sees and learns, Nick leaves New York.

This edition contains introductory material, a glossary, and study suggestions. The novel provides students with an opportunity to examine structure, style, character development, narrative voice and point of view, and symbolism and setting.

> *"He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just as if it were five years ago."*
> *p. 70*

Essex, England: Longman
Group UK Limited, 1991
[original 1925]

ISBN 0582060230

ICEFIELDS

Thomas Wharton

> *"I closed my eyes. And then I was upside down again, hanging in the crevasse. The graceful, motionless figure there before me. All around us, silence and stillness. The meditation of ice and rock." p. 58*

Icefields, set in Jasper, is an unusual story that tells of Dr. Edward Byrne, who falls into a crevasse in the icefields in 1898 and becomes haunted and inspired by the figure of an angel he sees suspended in the ice. The interlocking or parallel stories of the rest of the novel's diverse characters provide various views on the glacier, reflecting the characters' different goals or ends: money, inspiration, adventure or knowledge.

Short episodes and simple vocabulary make this textured, poetic novel an engaging read. Thematically, the book is about the quest for self-discovery and the sublime, transcendent beauties of nature. Its subject matter and style are both unique, and illustrate how rich and experimental Canadian literature has become. Wharton's book also demonstrates the influence of setting and atmosphere on character and plot, and could be used to teach novel structure, thematic development, irony and symbolism.

Edmonton, AB:
NeWest Press, 2000
Nunatuk Fiction edition
[original 1995]
274 pages

ISBN 0-920897-87-8

ISLAND WINGS: A MEMOIR

Cecil Foster

Island Wings is Cecil Foster's memoir of growing up in Barbados after his parents left him and his brothers behind when they moved to England after World War II. This was a common experience at the time, producing what Foster refers to as "barrel children." Although he experienced loss, regret and a difficult life being raised by his grandmother, he eventually educated himself and became a nationalist and a reporter. In 1979, Foster left the Caribbean to settle in Canada.

This thoughtful fourteen-chapter book is noteworthy for its use of local colour to describe the author's homeland. Foster celebrates community and cultural diversity, and illustrates the loyalty, courage and determination that help people to make a better life. *Island Wings* may be of particular interest to immigrant students. Some pre-reading background on the political history and culture of Barbados would enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the text.

> *"Years after we met, I would eventually know from my own personal experience what caused my father to spend most of his life feeling compelled to vindicate himself. For him the spark was music; for me it was when I realised I could write. I often think this his greatest gift to me is an artistic mind—even if he never hugged me." p. 217*

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins Publishers
Canada, 1998
Harper Perennial edition
313 pages

ISBN 0-00-63849-8

JANE EYRE

Charlotte Brontë

> *"I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour: stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth?" p. 349*

In ***Jane Eyre***, the protagonist recounts her life through a series of dramatic, even melodramatic events: an unhappy orphaned childhood, her grim schooling, employment as a governess, a brief period of happiness as the intended bride of her employer, Mr. Rochester, a disastrous wedding day disruption, her desperate flight and near destitution, and finally, independence and a happy reconciliation with the blinded Rochester.

The choice of Jane Eyre as first person narrator places her firmly at the centre of the story. The style is highly subjective, mirroring the inner development and spiritual and emotional struggles of Jane who is, from the first, a strong character refusing to accept her appointed place in society and holding a "passionate sense of the dignity and needs of her sex." Jane is not the traditional heroine: she is neither pretty nor passive. She possesses an independent moral force that pervades the novel.

As a mid-19th century novel, it is interesting to study as a forceful and realistic examination of a woman's struggle for self-fulfillment in an era that had yet to come to terms with such issues.

Toronto, ON: Bantam Books,
1981
[original 1847]

ISBN 0553210203

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

Amy Tan

Jing-mei, also known as June, is invited to take her late mother's place in a mah-jong foursome and begins ***The Joy Luck Club***, a powerful and compelling journey recounting the stories of immigrant Chinese mothers and their very American daughters. Chapters alternate the very diverse stories of the lives of the older and younger generations, and promote empathy for mothers and daughters alike. The novel is an especially rich source for character studies that would allow students to apply critical thinking skills in judging people and their actions.

The book provides much insight into Chinese and Chinese-American lifestyles. The chapters about the mothers' lives in China cover a difficult time in its history, and the novel includes examples of the mistreatment of women, as well as violence, death, robbery and abortion. There is some use of vulgar language. Hardships, poverty, family pride and the fear of losing face dominated the lives of the mothers; however, they survive incredible hardships and still strive to help their daughters.

Some research on Chinese culture should be done by the teacher or students. While many students of Chinese origins may welcome the opportunity to read and discuss their culture, there should be sensitivity to the discomfort that can accompany an in-depth exploration of one's culture.

> *"But I worried for Rich. Because I knew my feelings for him were vulnerable being felled by my mother's suspicions, passing remarks, an innuendoes. And I was afraid for what I would then lose, because Rich Schields adored me in the same way I adored Shoshana. His love was unequivocal."* p. 193

New York, NY: Ivy Books,
1990
[original 1989]

ISBN 0804106304

Awards:

Commonwealth Club gold award for fiction, 1989

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1989

LIFE OF PI

Yann Martel

> *"I will tell you a secret: a part of me was glad about Richard Parker. A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger."* p. 182

Life of Pi, a fable-like fantasy-parable, is about Pi (Piscine Molitor Patel), an intelligent sixteen-year-old East Indian boy. A zookeeper's son and practising Christian-Moslem-Hindu, he is on his way to Canada when he is shipwrecked with four wild animals. Pi and the tiger Richard Parker have to come to terms in order to survive during the 227-day raft journey.

Life of Pi is cleverly and thoughtfully composed, and interweaves many themes: religion, survival, ecology, isolation and love for life. The book lends itself to problem-solving and decision-making responses, as well as creative writing. It could be analyzed for the conventions of fantasy and fables, but its main value will be in its presentation of a philosophy for survival and enhanced living. Teachers should be aware of extended discussions on beliefs related to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Also, scenes of carnivorous animals killing their prey may make some students uncomfortable.

Toronto, ON:
Random House of Canada
Limited
Vintage Canada, 2002
[original 2001]
368 pages

ISBN 0–676–97377–9

Awards:

Man Booker Prize, 2002

LORD OF THE FLIES

William Golding

"The three boys rushed forward and Jack drew his knife again with a flourish. He raised his arm in the air. There came a pause, a hiatus, the pig continued to scream and the creepers to jerk, and the blade continued to flash at the end of a bony arm. The pause was only long enough for them to understand what an enormity the downward stroke would be." p. 31

Lord of the Flies, an allegory in which a group of English schoolboys, being evacuated during a nuclear war, are stranded on an uninhabited tropical island. Under the leadership of Ralph, who is staunchly supported by the pragmatic Piggy and the visionary Simon, all goes well initially. But irrational fears arise threatening the boys' sense of security. Irresponsible behaviour increases; the children, under the dictatorial influence of Jack, rapidly sink into savagery. Simon is mindlessly and brutally killed. Evil has been unleashed. At the culmination of the story, help arrives in the person of a naval officer; ironically, the boys will return to an adult world where the apparent order of civilization is threatened by the same forces of disorder they have just experienced.

Golding has said that his purpose in the novel was to trace the defects of society back to basic defects in human nature. Several elements combine to illustrate the forces of reason and morality at war with the dark forces of human nature. The same evil forces prevail in the adult world as well.

Characterization, conflict, plot development, foreshadowing, irony, suspense, imagery and symbolism are prominent aspects. A careful reading of the book reveals a critical view of modern society. The tightness of structure, the power of the narrative and the imaginativeness of the writing give a dramatically forceful depiction of the "darkness in the human heart."

New York, NY: Coward-
McCann, 1962
[original 1954]

ISBN 0698102193

METAMORPHOSIS: STAGES IN A LIFE

David Suzuki

> *"My parents had faith that if I worked hard and did well, the opportunity would arise. They still carried the tremendous respect for education that the Japanese have. ... To my parents, education was the magic key to changing one's status from an outsider to a respected Canadian." p. 106*

Metamorphosis is an autobiography by David Suzuki that adds "some meat to [his] electronic persona." Suzuki organizes the book as a series of transformations in his life, which he identifies as the metamorphoses necessary to the development of the human as well as of the fruit fly.

The early chapters are particularly interesting because of the author's candid examination of the "hybrid" quality that he sees as an essential part of being Japanese–Canadian. Suzuki identifies, without rancor, the racism and suspicion that sent his Japanese family to internment in interior British Columbia during World War II. Along with changes in his personal and family life, Suzuki comments on his career in genetics, his teaching, and his role in the media. It is heartening throughout to note Suzuki's emphasis on, and loyalty to, his Canadian identity.

The last two chapters seem rather disjointed, but in them Suzuki examines such dilemmas as "genetics and social responsibility" and "the media: news versus truth." The book might be useful in a humanities approach, as an introduction to a variety of related discussion topics such as Canadian history and social justice, or the ethical roles of genetics and the media.

Toronto, ON: General
Paperbacks, 1988
[original 1987]

ISBN 077367215X

THE MOON BY WHALE LIGHT

Diane Ackerman

The Moon by Whale Light is a collection of four "nature" essays that originally appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine. Ackerman, author of bestselling *A Natural History of the Senses*, describes her adventures in field studies of creatures that have not always had good press: bats and crocodilians, as well as the more popular whales and penguins.

The approach is personal, perceptive and fresh, without being cute. Bats are discovered to be "shy and winsome creatures," and wry connections are often made with the human animal, such as the penguins' view of humans as freakish fellow specimens who "stand upright, travel in groups, talk all the time, sort of waddle." Ackerman corrects common misconceptions and myths, asks curious questions, and provides new and shrewd observations from her own experience of a 20-million bat cave, an alligator farm, a whale study station and an Antarctic expedition.

Developing sensitivity in both scientific and human terms, the essays make easy and fascinating reading, suitable for a range of student abilities and interests: natural history, biology, the environment, adventure. They might be used separately, with small groups of interested students or for individual study.

"The louder the song, the plumper and juicier the frog. This puts the frog in an awkward position, of course. It needs to sing for a mate to perpetuate its kind, and in the tropical night it is full of sexual longing, but singing also reveals its whereabouts to any hungry Trachops cirrhosis. If it sings halfheartedly, the female frog won't be impressed, even though the bat might think it's just the call of a lovesick runt. If it sings about its prowess with large, croaking swollen pride, then a bat devours it." p. 20

New York, NY: Vintage
Books, 1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 0679742263

MY NAME IS ASHER LEV

Chaim Potok

> *"My father went into my room one night that week and found my desk strewn with drawings. There were drawings on the dresser and on the floor. I saw him peering at the drawings on the desk when I came in from the bathroom.*
> *'What's all this?' he asked.*
> *'Drawings'*
> *'Don't be disrespectful to me, Asher. I see they're drawings. You can't study Chumash, but this you have time for.'"* p. 99

My Name Is Asher Lev is the story of an Hasidic Jew, the son of two important members of Brooklyn's Ladover community. This novel tells of the conflicts he faces between his artistic talent and his deep religious faith and traditions. He is expected to follow the traditions of his family and faith, and work to help spread Ladover Hasidism when he comes of age. However, even at a young age, Asher is a gifted artist, and it is this gift that moves him into conflict with his community, faith and father. In the middle of this clash between father and son is Asher's mother, who becomes embroiled in a painful struggle to remain loyal to her husband and to her son. As a result of her suffering, Asher, now in his late teens, creates two symbolic paintings of her crucified between her husband and Asher. These two paintings bring the conflict to an explosive ending, and send Asher into exile to Paris.

This novel is a demanding one for student and teacher alike. Students may require information on the differences between Judaism and Christianity, and care must be taken to ensure that no misconceptions develop about either. Equally important, students must be aware that Hasidic Jews are representative of only one sect of the Jewish faith.

New York, NY: Fawcett Crest Books, 1972

ISBN 0449234983

NUK TESSLI: THE LIFE OF A WILDERNESS DWELLER

Chris Czajkowski

Nuk Tessli is an elegy to wilderness and a plea for its preservation by British Columbia author Chris Czajkowski. "Nuk Tessli Alpine Experiences" is the name of the author's hiking business on remote Spinster Lake in B.C.'s Coast Mountains. She lives there with her dogs Lonesome and Sport. *Nuk Tessli* is also about self-reliance; the author, for instance, builds her own cabins. Hardly a hermit, though, Czajkowski leads a busy life running her tourist business, giving art courses, and attending fairs in the outside world. This affectionate ode to conservation leaves off as logging companies prepare to move into the author's solitude.

Beautiful descriptions and drawings by the author make this a memorable read. Most readers will be charmed by the author's honesty and lifestyle. This is a book that will promote discussions on environmental issues and invite personal response. The writing itself can also be used as a model of descriptive prose.

> *"Pessimism is an integral part of a wilderness-dweller's make-up: unless you can imagine everything that might possibly go wrong, you cannot be prepared for it when it does."* p. 60

Victoria, BC
Orca Book Publishers, 2001
[original 1999]
180 pages

ISBN 1-55143-133-5

OBASAN

Joy Kogawa

> *"We were defined and identified by the way we were seen. A newspaper in B.C. headlined, 'They are a stench in the nostrils of the people of Canada.' We were therefore relegated to the cesspools. ...we lived in tents, in bunks, in skating rinks, in abandoned hotels. Most of us lived in row upon row of two-family, three-room huts, controlled and orderly as wooden blocks."*
> *p. 118*

Obasan depicts the evacuation, internment and dispersal of British Columbia's Japanese Canadians during World War II. Naomi and her brother are separated from their mother and father and others of their extended family, and are raised, during the war years, by their aunt (Obasan) and uncle.

Despite being treated as outcasts, the characters maintain their identity, dignity and self-worth at a time when racism and intolerance were accepted and promoted in Canada.

Contrasts between hope and despair, anger and resignation, beauty and ugliness, and pleasure and pain are presented through calm documentation. One of the strengths of the novel is its poetic and lyrical style, which should inspire personal response and provide a model for student writing.

Toronto, ON: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981

ISBN 0140067779

Awards:

Books in Canada First Novel Award, 1981

Canadian Authors Association Book of the Year Award, 1982

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Ernest Hemingway

In ***The Old Man and the Sea***, an old Cuban fisherman, Santiago, who has lived with the hope that he will catch the largest fish in the ocean—does. Without appropriate fishing equipment or sufficient food, he uses his wit and skill to conquer this prize, a large marlin. Throughout the struggle he is buoyed by the memories of his youthful, competitive arm wrestling and his baseball hero who never gave up. Badly cut, exhausted and hungry, Santiago begins the long sail home with his large fish, only to fight off numerous vicious sharks who are after an easy meal. In the course of a day and a night, the prized marlin is completely consumed by ocean scavengers. Santiago arrives home in the night to a deserted dock, single-handedly secures his boat, and furls the sail. Manolin, a devoted young friend, finds him close to death the following morning.

Written in short, descriptive sentences and with minute detail, Hemingway draws the reader into Santiago's struggle. The novel is one long chapter emphasizing the extended battle. Hemingway makes use of figurative language, foreshadowing, irony, allegory and symbolism. Although teachable as a story of personal struggle, there are deeper implications. Santiago is figuratively struggling with life: its obstacles and triumphs.

> *"I wonder why he jumped, the old man thought. He jumped almost as though to show me how big he was. I know now, anyway, he thought. I wish I could show him what sort of man I am. But then he would see the cramped hand. Let him think I am more man than I am and I will do so. I wish I was the fish, he thought, with everything he has against only my will and my intelligence." p. 64*

New York, NY: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1952

ISBN 0684718057

Awards:

Pulitzer Prize, 1953

OLD MAN ON HIS BACK: PORTRAIT OF A PRAIRIE LANDSCAPE

Sharon Butala and Courtney Milne

> *"I think now, although I'd never have admitted it then, nor for years afterwards, that I married this stunning landscape as much as I married Peter. To live in such beauty seemed to me nothing short of a gift from God."* p. 4

Old Man on His Back tells about how Saskatchewan writer Sharon Butala and her husband came to sell 13 000 acres of their prairie ranchland to the nature Conservancy of Canada in order to protect its heritage value. Butala celebrates the prairies while describing her own personal connections to the landscape. The book's themes include alienation, environmental conservation, the relationship between humans and landscape, and the discovery of the sacred in nature. Butala makes references to Christianity, spiritualism of Aboriginal peoples and her personal, very strong environmental beliefs.

This coffee table book is a beautiful fusion of Milne's photos and Butala's descriptive, reflective narrative style. The book's photographs give teachers an opportunity to discuss visual texts and representational skills and approaches. Students might be asked to meditate on their own connections with nature or their region.

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
(and the Nature Conservancy
of Canada), 2002

ISBN 0-00-200085-7 (paper)

THE QUEEN OF OCTOBER

Shelley Fraser Mickle

The Queen of October is the story of 14-year-old Sally Maulden, who is living with her grandparents in Coldwater, Arkansas while her parents are getting a divorce. She meets a variety of interesting, and often eccentric, people in Coldwater and matures in the process.

This is a sympathetic story of a girl eventually coming to terms with a fairly common family situation. Her initial anger with her parents' "bust-up" gives way to tolerance and a learning "to love herself." She also learns to understand her aging grandparents and the variety of off-beat characters of different races and backgrounds that she encounters.

The simple, straightforward narrative avoids sentimentality, and the tone is warm and humorous. Colloquial language, occasional racial slurs and frank prejudices reflect the sometimes stereotyped characters, but lead to increased understanding and sensitivity, all reinforced through a child's voice and perceptions.

> *"My grandmother had already passed me several pearls about Jews. She said they were big eaters and were oversexed. She told me that I must never get into a car with one. Guy Levy was wealthy, though—very wealthy. He owned a lot of the town and most of the houses people rented. My grandmother said that if Benjamin Levy ever stopped the car for me, it would be all right to get in. In fact, she encouraged it. But Joel Weiss, Mr. Weiss's son—now, he was a different story."*
> *p. 67*

Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1992 [original 1989]

ISBN 1565120035

Awards:

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1989

THE ROAD PAST ALTAMONT

Gabrielle Roy

In ***The Road Past Altamont***, eight-year-old Christine, a young girl from St. Boniface, Manitoba, eloquently describes her adventures and presents the reader with impressions of her mother, Eveline, her grandmother, and the neighbours of her childhood.

This novel is divided into four sections, each of which is a complete story and could be read as such. Each section describes a journey: to the grandmother's house on the edge of the Manitoba prairie; to the lake; from one side of Winnipeg to the other in a mover's cart; and to Altamont, a country of memory and dreams that may or may not exist. For Christine, these journeys recalled from childhood to adulthood serve as a foundation for her writing.

The tone of each adventure is nostalgic and should engage student interest. Roy's writing can also be studied in terms of structure and style. This delightful first person narrative is easy to read and is ideal for small group study.

> *"But always the slave of our needs, when and how could she have yielded for even a day to the still eager desires of her own spirit—those wide ranging desires that were turned always toward water, toward the open plains, and toward those distant horizons which alone reveal to us some part of our truest selves? And was she not beginning to realize that for her it was late now and not much time remained to appease those longings that, if not satisfied, leave us as if imperfect in our own eyes, in a train of nostalgic regrets? But for this reason she had become vigilant to obtain for us, at least, the things she had not possessed of the world." pp. 52–53*

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1989
[original 1966]

ISBN 0771098561

A SEPARATE PEACE

John Knowles

Set during World War II, ***A Separate Peace*** tells of boys in a New England preparatory school that are eagerly anticipating the day when they will turn 18 and be drafted. Gene causes Phineas, his best friend, to fall from a tree and severely fracture his leg, thus ending Phineas' hopes of ever enlisting. Phineas returns to school and appears to have accepted his new limitations, but Gene is guilt-ridden. He is accused of purposely causing the fall. Phineas, angry and disbelieving, accidentally falls again and dies, leaving Gene with a reinforced sense of his responsibility in the death. The plot moves swiftly and the characters are well-developed. Symbolism adds to the texture of this novel, and the emotional moods of gloom and sorrow make this a powerful and moving work. Knowles' characterization is an effective topic for class discussion.

> *"He possessed an extra vigor, a heightened confidence in himself, a serene capacity for affection which saved him. Nothing as he was growing up at home, nothing at Devon, nothing even about the war had broken his harmonious and natural unity. So at last I had."*
> *pp. 194–195*

New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1959

ISBN 0553104403

Awards:

Rosenthal Award, National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1960

William Faulkner Foundation Award, 1960

STILL ME

Christopher Reeve

> *"I mouthed my first lucid words to her: 'Maybe we should let me go.' Dana started crying. She said, 'I'm only going to say this once: I will support whatever you want to do, because this is your life, and your decision. But I want you to know that I'll be with you for the long haul, no matter what.' Then she added the words that saved my life: 'You're still you. And I love you.'"* p. 28

Still Me is the challenging but interesting autobiography of Christopher Reeve, the movie star/director who was left quadriplegic after a tragic 1995 equine accident. The book recounts Reeve's personal and his family's courageous three-year adjustment to his changed condition. It also reviews his Hollywood career, as well as his efforts to raise public awareness on spinal cord injuries. On the surface, *Still Me* is about Reeve's struggle with his disability, but at a deeper level, it is a study of fame, true greatness, real heroism and healing. This easy-to-read, positive and passionately-written book also includes four of his post-accident speeches in the appendix.

Still Me would provide an interesting real-life perspective within the context of media or film studies. It may also be particularly for individual study by students who have been affected by disability in their own lives.

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada Ltd., 1999
Ballantine Books edition
[original 1998]
344 pages

ISBN 0–345–43241–X

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Charles Dickens

Set in London and Paris during the French Revolution, ***A Tale of Two Cities*** is the story of Doctor Alexander Manette, his daughter Lucie, and Charles Darnay. Dr. Manette, having been unjustly imprisoned for crimes committed by the Marquis of St. Evremonde, is called to identify Darnay at a trial in London years later. Darnay is accused of treason and is only saved by Sidney Carton, a dissolute man who bears a striking resemblance to Darnay. Darnay and Carton become friends of the Manette family and Darnay eventually marries Lucie. After the birth of their first child, Darnay returns to France at the height of the revolution to rescue an old servant of his aristocratic family, the St. Evremondes. Caught, imprisoned, and sentenced to death, Darnay is rescued by Carton who then dies in Darnay's place. Darnay and Lucie are reunited in England.

This classic novel has a complicated plot replete with intrigue and suspense. The important element in the novel is the portrayal of the social conditions of Dickens' era, with such themes as "violence begets violence," "the gap between rich and poor," and the "sacrifices required of individuals to overcome poverty and the abuse of power." While not precisely accurate from a historical point of view, this novel does give the reader a sense of history.

This edition contains biographical notes on Dickens and a helpful introduction. Teachers may wish to offer the novel in a humanities unit, or study the novel at the same time that the French Revolution is being discussed in social studies.

> *"He was driven on, and other carriages came whirling by in quick succession; the Minister, the State-Projector, the Farmer-General, the Doctor, the Lawyer, the Ecclesiastic, the Grand Opera, the Comedy, the whole Fancy Ball in a bright continuous flow, came whirling by. The rats had crept out to their holes to look on, and they remained looking on for hours; soldiers and police often passed between them and the spectacle, and making a barrier behind which they slunk, and through which they peeped."*
> *p. 143*

Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1985
[original 1859]

ISBN 0140430547

TAMARIND MEM

Anita Rau Badami

🍁

> *"'Walking away is hard,' I reply. 'It's easier to grit your teeth and stay.' 'No-no, you have got it wrong,' protests Latha. 'Going away is the easiest thing in the world. It is like dying. So simple it is to die ... The real test is life itself, whether you are strong enough to stay and fight.'"* p. 208

Tamarind Mem is a loving portrait of two generations of women in an East Indian family. The protagonist, Kamini, is a newcomer to Canada. She has left her eccentric family back in India, including her mother Saroja (nicknamed Tamarind Mem after a sour fruit). When Kamini receives a postcard from her mother saying she has sold their home and is travelling through India, both women are forced into the past to confront their dreams and losses and to explore the love that binds them as mother and daughter.

British Columbia author Anita Rau Badami successfully captures the rhythms of Indian English speech while sticking to traditional storytelling. This is a strong, humorous novel that invites personal response from students to write about their own families. This is also a model text for celebrating and building community, and could be used to prompt discussion about the differences between old and new world cultures.

Toronto, ON: Penguin Books
Canada Ltd., 2001
[original 1996]
266 pages

ISBN 0-14-100249-2

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Arthur C. Clarke

2001: A Space Odyssey, a classic speculative fiction novel, with a new introduction by Clarke, explores the origin and development of humankind. It begins as early civilization is visited by aliens from outer space, and follows human progress to the time of space travel.

When a mysterious object called TMI is detected close to Saturn, a manned-mission flight is launched to determine if other life forms exist in the Universe. Guided by HAL, an almost-human computer, the voyage ends in chaos and David Bowman, the only surviving crew member, encounters the unknown by himself. Isolated from Earth, David experiences a shocking journey and undergoes a transformation that changes his life forever.

This novel presents an intriguing plot and an unusual view of humankind. The philosophical concepts, the symbols and ethics regarding computers and technology, should arouse student interest, particularly in small group study.

> *"When Earth was tamed and tranquil, and perhaps a little tired, there would still be scope for those who loved freedom, for the tough pioneers, and restless adventurers. But their tools would not be ax and gun and canoe and wagon; they would be nuclear power plant and plasma drive and hydroponic farm. The time was fast approaching with Earth, like all mothers, must say farewell to her children." p. 66*

Markham, ON: Penguin
Books Canada Ltd., 1991
[original 1968]

ISBN 0451450639

THE WINE OF ASTONISHMENT

Earl Lovelace

> *"One day he tell Buntin, 'I feel as if time flying away and leaving me.'*
> *'You's a young man,' Buntin tell him.*
> *'What you would say if you was old like me.'*
> *One day Buntin ask him, when he come back from one of his trips, 'What you want with this place? ...*
> *He didn't have an answer.*
> *'You search for something, what it is?'*
> *It was as if he was searching for something, like a woman, Buntin say. But it wasn't a woman, it was his life he was looking for."* p. 91

The Wine of Astonishment presents the history of a Trinidadian Spiritual Baptist ("Shouter") community, from the time when the sect's practices of worship were banned in 1917 until the ban was lifted in 1951. This edition has a good introduction that deals with both contextual issues and characterization, thus providing a solid starting point.

The novel is excellent social history, but social history made vivid and immediate by a first person narrator—Eva, a black peasant woman who has lived through these years. The rhythms of her dialect and her eye for the significant details of life, are the strong points of this novel. Some students may need assistance with the Trinidadian dialect, and oral reading might be helpful in this regard.

Major characters in the work show different reactions to colonialism. Ivan Morton chooses an "English" education, losing touch with his community as a result. Corporal Prince chooses to serve his colonial masters, and deals even more callously with his people than do they. Bolo is courageous and defiant, wanting to aid his people, yet unable to direct his anger effectively. Bee, in some ways a Christ-figure, is heroic in his spiritual growth and adherence to his ideals. Lovelace's characters all have human strengths and weaknesses, and he presents them with sympathetic insight.

Colonialism, oppression, civil rights, religious beliefs and the value of human dignity are major issues in this novel, and students should critically examine them in order to gain a more balanced perspective. Some research may also be required in order to enhance meaning and students' understanding of the social and historical context of the novel.

Oxford, England: Heinemann
International Literature and
Textbooks, 1986
[original 1982]

ISBN 0435988808

WYRD SISTERS

Terry Pratchett

Wyrd Sisters identifies the magic and mystical world of the kingdom of Lancre. Another of his Discworld novels, Wyrd Sisters is the rollicking story of three witches who, while gathered around their cauldron, are interrupted by murder and mayhem. Worse yet, they are burdened by the sudden arrival of a royal baby. The sisters give the prince away to a travelling troupe of actors, and assume their troubles are over. However, their lives are further complicated by the appearance of the King's ghost, who petitions them to recover his child and restore the kingdom to the rightful heir.

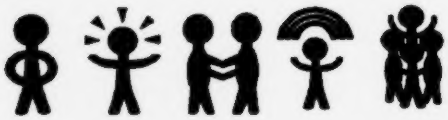
This fantasy novel is designed with clever allusion and word play. The dialogue is rich and engaging and the imagery imaginative and colourful. Plot complications are funny and fast-moving, and the role of the occult is not to be taken seriously in this work. The tone is richly comic and cleverly delivered tongue-in-cheek.

Granny Weatherwax and the spell sisters provide a comic characterization in a farcical plot, which is a counterpoint to Macbeth. The use of language is a delightful modern parody of Shakespearean word play. The book should provoke some interesting discussion on style and satire, and may be most appropriate for individual or small group study, or on an optional basis.

> *"'If you do confess,' said the duchess, 'you will merely be burned at the stake. And, please, no humorous remarks.'*
>
> *'What false rumours?'*
>
> *The duke closed his eyes, but the visions were still there. 'Concerning the accidental death of the late King Verence,' he whispered hoarsely. ...*
>
> *'Oh, I don't know nothing false,' she said. 'I know you stabbed him ....'"*
> *pp. 136–137*

Toronto, ON: Penguin Books
Canada Ltd., 1990
[original 1988]

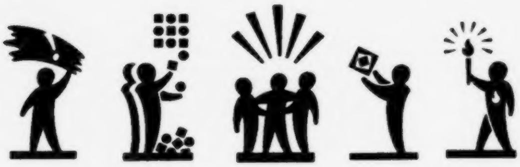
ISBN 0451450124



20-2

English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



ADRIFT: SEVENTY-SIX DAYS LOST AT SEA

Steven Callahan

"Presuming the raft stays intact, and I acquire no additional food or water, I can last at best until February 22, fourteen more days. I may just reach the shipping lanes, where I will have a remote chance of being spotted. Dehydration will take its toll by that time. My tongue will swell until it fills my mouth and then will blacken. My eyes will be sucked deeply into my head. Death will knock at the door of my delirious mind." p. 61

In ***Adrift***, Steven Callahan, sailing solo across the Atlantic, is left with only a life raft, knife, emergency kit, small sail and a sleeping bag when his sloop sinks. For 76 days, his ingenuity and resourcefulness keep him alive in his small life raft, Rubber Ducky III. He survives on raw fish, tiny amounts of painstakingly collected water and anything even remotely edible. He expresses clearly the emotional roller coaster of hope and despair as he is at the mercy of the weather, the sea, sharks and large fish during his lengthy ordeal. Emaciated and covered in sores, he lands in Guadeloupe, having saved his own life with his initiative, skill and endurance.

This is a survival story that should especially appeal to male students, and to students who are able to empathize with Callahan. Diagrams and illustrations allow the reader to visualize the hardships endured by the author.

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, 1987
[original 1986]

ISBN 0345340833

BACK ON THE REZ: FINDING THE WAY HOME

Brian Maracle

Back on the Rez is the nonfiction account of Mohawk writer Brian Maracle who returned to his boyhood reserve home in the 1990s. The book tells of Maracle's adjustment to simpler, rural living conditions and describes his attempt to "find his roots." It also explores contemporary social issues related to cultural heritage, change, adaptation and the community's attempt to revitalize.

Back on the Rez is thoughtfully-written in short digestible chapters, each about three to four pages long. The author is honest and critical in his approach, attacking corruption and fearlessly assessing Aboriginal issues such as gambling, tax exemptions and media coverage. However, it is important to note that the book is told from only the author's point of view. Some readers may find problematic statements about Caucasians, Aboriginals, politicians, and the discord among the governing bodies of the Six Nations. Teachers should undertake the teaching of this book with considerable care and preparation, including research into the other perspectives on key issues.

This would be a good model for Aboriginal students to explore their own cultural roots, but will also be of interest to non-Aboriginal students who want a better understanding of Native issues in Canada. The text suits interdepartmental curricular approaches to teaching English language arts, social studies and Aboriginal studies.

> *"The reserves mean many things to the Onkwehonwe. On one level, these postage-stamp remnants of our original territories are nagging reminders of the echoing vastness of what we have lost. On another, they are the legacy and bastion of our being. They are a refuge, a prison, a haven, a madhouse, a fortress, a birthplace, a Mecca, a resting place, Home–Sweet–Home, Fatherland and Motherland rolled into one." p. 3*

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books of Canada
Ltd., 1997
[original 1996]
306 pages

ISBN 0-14-024361-5

BEFORE WINGS

Beth Goobie

> *"She turned back to the spirits. They had stopped wailing and were floating on the quiet water, their bodies intertwined as if they were extensions of one another. She wasn't certain, but she thought they were watching her."* p. 91

Before Wings is an honest, intense book by one of Canada's top young adult fiction writers. The main character, Adrien, is an intelligent, tough fifteen-year-old who survived a near-fatal brain aneurysm two years earlier. Now she consumed by thoughts of her own mortality. In hopes of helping her move beyond her terrifying experience, Adrien's parents send her to Camp Lakeshore, owned and operated by her Aunt Erin, a woman with a haunted past of her own. While she is there, Adrien bonds with Paul, a teen who is convinced that he has dreamt and foreseen his own death. Adrien also begins receiving visions and messages from the spirits of five young women: a group of campers who died long ago in a tragic accident. As Adrien learns to deal with her fear of death, she becomes more focused on how to live a better life. Goobie's theme is about the precarious coming-of-age of an unusual youth.

This rich, realistic mystery-love story does justice to the sensitivity and sensibilities of teenagers. *Before Wings* is easy-to-read with lots of dialogue and an upbeat ending. The book also powerfully captures the atmosphere and mores of a youth summer camp. There is some contextualized coarse language that effectively adds realism. The book also contains references to gender orientation and a tactful scene of premarital adolescent sex.

Victoria, BC:
Orca Book Publishers, 2003
[original 2000]
203 pages

ISBN 1-55143-163-7

THE BUMBLEBEE FLIES ANYWAY

Robert Cormier

"Sad somehow, one life ending while another began. But he drew a kind of comfort from this knowledge, seeing for the first time the continuity of life, nature at work in the world, providing a never-ending process of life in all its forms. Maybe there was some kind of continuity in people too. Nature at work in people. Or was it God? He shivered at the thought." p. 126

The Bumblebee Flies Anyway is about sixteen-year-old Barney Snow who can't remember what life was like before he came to the experimental clinic for the terminally ill. He mistakenly believes that he is a control subject and that it is all the other patients who are sick. However, while he helps a fellow patient, Mazzo, Barney unexpectedly uncovers the secret that he too will die.

The construction of the Bumblebee, a car, on the rooftop of the clinic, and its ultimate flight, are the result of the love, the compassion, and the empathy the boys share with, and for, each other. The flight does question assisted suicide and moral obligations to the terminally ill.

The theme needs to be dealt with sensitively and requires a great deal of acceptance and understanding. Small group discussions leading to full class discussions may facilitate increased comprehension of the novel. It is eloquently written, and students should have no problems visualizing the characters and the action. It is a compelling story.

New York, NY: Dell
Publishing, 1991
[original 1983]

ISBN 044090871X

Awards:

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1983

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN: THE AMAZING TRUE STORY OF THE YOUNGEST AND MOST DARING IN THE HISTORY OF FUN AND PROFIT!

Frank W. Abagnale

> *"Once I embarked on counterfeiting checks, I realized I had reached a point of no return. I had chosen paperhanging as a profession, my means of surviving, and having chosen a nefarious occupation, I set out to perfect my working skills."*
> *p. 128*

Catch Me If You Can is an easy-to-read example of true-crime nonfiction about an individual who has had a successful career on both sides of the law. A challenge-seeker, Frank Abagnale flew a jet, practised law without a license, and pretended to be a sociology professor. He lived out his wildest fantasies cashing over 2.5 million dollars in forged cheques before he was twenty-one. Living on the lam, he was pursued in twenty-six countries and fifty American states. Then, he experienced a life change and is currently a respected authority on security and counterfeiting, working for the FBI crime unit.

This popular, richly-detailed memoir is a psychological study of a daring, intelligent and fascinating individual whose exploits are strangely impressive for their flamboyance and sheer audacity. Students could be asked to respond personally to Abagnale's methods and analyze the reasons for his success as well as his life change. The book contains minor examples of 1960s male chauvinism that does not detract from the narrative but will need some teacher direction.

New York, NY: Random
House, Inc., 2002
Broadway Books edition
[original 1980]
293 pages

ISBN 0–7679–0538–5

DANCES WITH WOLVES

Michael Blake

Dances with Wolves begins with the ironic circumstances under which Lieutenant Dunbar is assigned to an abandoned prairie army outpost. Isolated in the wilderness, Dunbar is drawn irrevocably to the nearby Comanche camp where he begins a cultural odyssey that changes him forever. He gradually becomes part of the proud nomadic people who fascinate him so much. Finally, he faces a critical choice by the inevitable movement of the army against his new home and people.

Although lengthy, the story line is fast-paced and should hold student interest. Specific characterization, although interesting, is secondary to the study of the moral dilemma that Dunbar faces; essentially this is a story of one man's choices. The plot has the classic elements of isolation and survival; it is the study of "civilized man" and what that means to Dunbar, and more importantly, what that means to the reader.

The writing is descriptive and image-laden and has the ability to transport readers to the world Dunbar inhabits. His motives are essentially understandable and noble in spite of the brutal and tragic elements of his life.

> *"The white soldier with blood on his face had brought back Stands With A Fist, and Ten Bears was convinced that this surprise was a bright omen, one that should be followed through on. The issue of the white race had troubled his thoughts too long. For years he had not been able to see anything good in their coming. But he wanted to desperately. Today he had seen something good at last, and now he was determined not to let what he considered a golden opportunity slip past." p. 106*

New York, NY: Fawcett
Gold Medal, 1988

ISBN 0449134482

THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS

John Wyndham

> *"'If we face it squarely, there's a simple choice,' I said. 'Either we can set out to save what can be saved from the wreck —and that has to include ourselves: or we can devote ourselves to stretching the lives of these people a little longer. That is the most objective view I can take. But I can see, too, that the most obviously humane course is also, probably the road to suicide.'"*
> *p. 103*

The Day of the Triffids is a science fiction classic in which carnivorous alien plants invade 21st century Earth. After a meteor shower blinds most of the population, the triffids use their poison stingers to paralyze humans before they devour them. The protagonist William Masen is in a London hospital with bandaged eyes when the showers occur, protecting him from the blinding effect. He and another patient, Josella Playton, team up and go looking for other unblinded humans to organize and resist the triffids.

This doomsday book suggests an unexpected way that alien life might destroy the planet and examines how human beings respond to a serious crisis. It raises problem-solving and decision-making possibilities and scenarios that could be explored and discussed by students.

Toronto, ON: Penguin Books
of Canada Ltd., n.d.
Penguin Putnam edition
[original 1951]
272 pages

ISBN 0–140–00993–0

DEAR NOBODY

Berlie Doherty

Helen, the main narrator of ***Dear Nobody***, is pregnant as a result of a brief sexual relationship with a young man named Chris. Her letters to her unborn child, whom she calls "Nobody," are a record of her anxieties, her confusion and her growing maturity. At first, she hates the unborn child and attempts, unsuccessfully, to abort it. As her pregnancy progresses, the letters to "Nobody" develop a very real bond. When Helen gives birth to her baby, she names her daughter Amy, a name meaning loved one, or friend.

Chris, in contrast, has no sensitivity. He has some short-lived feelings of guilt, but runs away from the consequences of his actions. Chris shares the narration with Helen, and his thoughts and deeds show that he cares for no one but himself. Only at the end of the novel does he begin to admit his weaknesses.

The issues in this book are difficult and, for some readers, perhaps controversial. Yet this British author's focus is clearly on the importance of moral choices. There are no depictions of sexual intercourse, or even of childbirth. Throughout her novel, Doherty emphasizes the importance of responsible behaviour, of self-knowledge and of love.

> *"We walked back to Helen's house in silence, so full of thoughts that there was nothing to say. I had my arm round her. 'It'll be all right,' I kept saying. 'I'll stay with you, whatever happens.' The words just came out. I've no idea what I meant by them. When I thought of them afterwards I went cold and scared inside, but at the time it seemed to be the only thing to say, so I said it."* p. 30

London, England: Hamish
Hamilton Ltd., 1991

ISBN 0241130565

Awards:

Carnegie Medal, 1991

Sankei Award, 1991

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

Jack Higgins

> *"'You have brought me nothing and yet with men like that, with such facilities, you should have been capable of bringing me Churchill out of England.' There was a moment of complete silence as Hitler glanced from face to face. 'Is that not so?' Mussolini looked hunted. Goebbels nodded eagerly. It was Himmler who added fuel to the flames by saying quietly, 'Why not, my Fuhrer. After all, anything is possible, no matter how miraculous, as you have shown by bringing the Duce of Gran Sasso.'" p. 27*

In ***The Eagle Has Landed***, after intense training, a small force of German paratroopers lands on the Norfolk coast of England in November 1943, with the aim of capturing Winston Churchill.

This action-packed wartime thriller contains elements of heroism, duplicity, bloodshed, irony and surprise. The theme, though certainly subordinate to plot and character, focuses on the fact that war is a fight for survival and, therefore, will expose many people to danger. This novel is an excellent vehicle for the study of plot development.

London, England: Pan Books
Ltd., 1976
[original 1975]

ISBN 0330246305

FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON

Daniel Keyes

Flowers for Algernon is told through the voice of Charlie Gordon, who has an IQ below 70. He participates in an experiment that gives him above average intelligence. Recorded as a diary, Charlie's progression is revealed through his initial poor writing skills and his later sophisticated language abilities.

The novel focuses on man's inhumanity to man. Charlie is seen by his co-workers as a source of humour, but as he progresses intellectually, he is shunned by these same people. The novel criticizes science for pursuing knowledge without considering moral implications, and suggests that the intellectual side of human nature needs to be balanced with compassion and love. Charlie's progression from his childlike state of innocence to his intellectual–social maturity prompts the reader to question society and its motives.

Class discussion should include the idea that loneliness and the inability to communicate occur at both ends of the intellectual spectrum. The novel may promote an interesting study of acceptance and understanding.

> *"But with the freedom came a sadness. I wanted to be in love with her. I wanted to overcome my emotional and sexual fears, to marry, have children, settle down. Now it's impossible. I am just as far away from Alice with an I.Q. of 185 as I was when I had an I.Q. of 70. And this time we both know it."* p. 126

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1966

ISBN 0553124986

Awards

Nebula Award, Science Fiction Writers of America, 1966

FORBIDDEN CITY

William Bell

> *"Up until then, thousands had refused to leave the square and every day the place was a carpet of humanity. But on the thirteenth one thousand students started a hunger strike and vowed to keep it up until either they died or the government promised to meet with their representatives and the begin reforms. When I heard that I rushed down there." pp. 66–67*

In ***Forbidden City*** Alex Jackson, the 17-year-old son of a CBC news cameraman, is with his father on assignment in China's capital, Beijing. As Alex relishes the excitement and adventures of his new residence, he reveals to the reader the events leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and the forces controlling the lives of the Chinese people.

The events are told through personal accounts in Alex's diary. His sojourns into a tranquil city, his zest to understand the language and the people, and his encounter with the university students are suddenly transformed into a battlefield. Government forces are horridly depicted as opposing unarmed citizens, whose goal is simply to seek an audience with those in authority.

The novel provides us with an outsider's view of conditions within China. As the opposing forces clash, Alex is shot and seeks refuge in strange surroundings. As a student sympathizer, he is now the one who is being entrusted with the responsibility to capture the scenes of injustice and present the truth to the outside world. What began as an adventure now becomes a mission.

This is a thought-provoking novel that lends itself to discussion about changing political and social order in the world.

Toronto, ON: General Paperbacks, 1991 [original 1990)

ISBN 0773673148

Awards:

Belgium Award for Excellence in Children's Literature, 1990

Ontario School Librarians' Award for Excellence, 1990

GIFTED HANDS

Ben Carson (with Cecil Murphey)

Abandoned by his father, the protagonist of ***Gifted Hands*** grows up in the tenements of Boston. The son of a single, uneducated mother, Ben Carson is an unlikely candidate to become a leading neurosurgeon. Yet, he overcomes disadvantages, such as prejudice and peer pressure, to succeed. His ability to work hard and laugh, and his belief in God, permeates his story.

This easy-to-read biography offers the example of a positive role model who overcomes much adversity with the support and encouragement of adults. The narrative enhances the reader's views of blacks and single mothers.

Ben Carson's story proves that one can achieve goals with dedication and discipline. Students could discuss or write about how they or their families have overcome adversity in their lives.

"'This is crazy.' I finally mumbled. 'I must be crazy. Sane people don't try to kill their friends.' The rim of the tub felt cool under my hands. I put my hands on my face. 'I'm doing so well at school, and then I do this.'
I'd dreamed of being a doctor since I was 8 years old. But how could I fulfill the dream with such a terrible temper."
p. 57

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Publishers,
1993
[original 1990]

ISBN 0061042536

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Douglas Adams

> *"'My God,' complained Arthur, 'you're talking about a positive mental attitude and you haven't even had your planet demolished today. I woke up this morning and thought I'd have a nice relaxed day, do a bit of reading, brush the dog ... It's now just after four in the afternoon and I'm already being thrown out of an alien spaceship six light years from the smoking remains of the Earth!'"* p. 57

In ***The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy***, a classic episodic science fiction novel made up of equal parts of adventure and humour, Arthur hitch hikes through space in a quest for the meaning of life, the Universe, and everything! Arthur Dent, resident of a perfectly uneventful British town, is rescued by Ford Prefect, editor of the electronic book, Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, just as Earth is blasted apart by Vogons. A nontraditional female character provides added zest to the unexpected, fast-paced happenings.

This somewhat irreverent approach to the creation of the Universe and humankind is essentially British in approach and language. It uses both subtle and slapstick humour to parody revolution, racism, government, politics, religion, and even literature. Mature students, working individually or in small groups, should have ample opportunity to critically examine popular opinions and a variety of ideologies during this novel study.

London, England: Pan Books Ltd., 1979

ISBN 0330258648

HOLE IN MY LIFE

Jack Gantos

Hole in My Life is an autobiographical exploration of how a Florida teen with a promising school record and a burning desire to become a writer ends up in doing time in a medium-security prison for drug offences. Although Gantos does not attempt to absolve himself of his past, he does explicate how easily a youth may be seduced into a life of quick money and easy living. Gantos tells of a trail of circumstances that lead to his unthinking involvement in a drug smuggling venture, his descent into heavy drug use and his eventual conviction for selling marijuana. By 1971, at the age of 20, Gantos was serving a six-year sentence in a U.S. federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky.

Gantos writes openly and candidly of a life lived on the edge of poverty in Fort Lauderdale and St. Croix, the underworld of drugs, and the brutality of prison. Teachers need be aware that this text contains inappropriate language, and descriptions of sexuality, prison behaviour, and drug and alcohol use. It also contains references to race and social/economic difference that will need sensitive discussion. However, Gantos writes with equal power of his pursuit of the dream of becoming a writer and of the redemptive power of literature. The positive aspect of the book is that the writer survived prison, drugs and alcohol to become a positive contributor in society and today is the celebrated author of over thirty books for young readers, most recently the highly-acclaimed Joey Pigza series.

> *"I wasn't raised around this level of violence. I wasn't prepared for it, and I've never forgotten it. Even now, when walking some of Boston's meaner streets, I find myself moving like a knife, carving my way around people, cutting myself out of their picture and leaving nothing of myself behind but a hole."* p. 5

New York, NY:
Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
2002

ISBN 0-374-39988-3

IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

John Dudley Ball

"That was what hurt. An outsider might be all right if her were a good fellow and all that, but the idea of a black man stuck up like a jagged rock in the middle of a channel. By the time they had reached the police station, Sam had still not made up his mind. He wanted the crime to be solved, but he wanted it solved by someone whom he could look up to and respect." p. 60

In the Heat of the Night is an intelligent but readable formula murder mystery set in the Deep South of the 1960s, at the time of the Civil Rights Movement. Virgil Tibbs, a black homicide detective in California, is mistakenly picked up and arrested in a murder case while passing through a small town. Eventually, the somewhat-bigoted Chief Gillespie enlists Tibbs' help to solve the case and find the real murderer. As the investigation continues, Caucasian officer Sam Woods starts to emulate Virgil and his methods, suggesting that the detective has become his role model.

This is a whodunit, read principally for the challenge of solving the crime. It provides opportunities to study the form and technique of the detective novel, including the use of stock characters to advance the plot and the introduction of a red herring to create obstacles.

It is also a study of prejudice and discrimination with a message of hope, and could be studied for its positive insights on tolerance and understanding. In a crisis, people of different backgrounds are able to cooperate and overcome their differences to deal with a challenge. Teachers should be aware of potentially problematic language references, especially to African–Americans and Italians.

New York, NY:
Carroll & Graf Publishing,
1992
[original 1965]
185 pages

ISBN 0–88902–029–9

OF MICE AND MEN

John Steinbeck

In ***Of Mice and Men***, Steinbeck tells the story of two ironically-named drifters, George Milton and Lennie Small, who arrive at a California ranch during the Depression. Not realizing his own strength or size, the intellectually disabled Lennie has, in the past, accidentally killed his pet mice, and eventually he kills his boss' daughter-in-law. George, who has lovingly cared for and looked after Lennie, realizes that this death has killed his dream of acquiring his own ranch, and that he must find Lennie before the ranch hands do. George does find Lennie first and realizes that he must kill his friend as an act of love, in order to remove him from further suffering.

"A guy needs somebody—to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody ... I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick." These words, spoken by Crooks, a black ranch hand, identify the theme. The style of the novel is simple—the words are mainly monosyllabic, suggesting the nature of the people Steinbeck is describing. The sentence structure is often rhythmic, poetic, portraying sometimes a mood of peace and tranquility, and sometimes one of violence. The simplicity of the setting lends itself to a discussion of unity, symbol and theme.

In the classroom, it is important to reflect on the social considerations of alienation, desire, love, dignity and commitment. Some of the characters use profane language, but this punctuates the emotions that have been stirred up and reflects the attitudes found in the lives and circumstances of American workers at that time.

> *"'Funny how you an' him string along together.' It was Slim's calm invitation to confidence. 'What's funny about it?' George demanded defensively. 'Oh, I dunno. Hardly none of the guys ever travel together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. You know how the hands are, they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody.'"*
> *p. 43*

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1972
[original 1937]

ISBN 0553131001

THE PERFECT STORM: A TRUE STORY OF MEN AGAINST THE SEA

Sebastian Junger

"The transition from crisis to catastrophe is fast, probably under a minute ... There's no time to put on survival suits or grab a life vest; the boat's moving through the most extreme motion of her life and there isn't even time to shout ... The TV, the washing machine, the VCR tapes, the men, all go flying. And, seconds later, the water moves in." p. 177

The Perfect Storm, popularized by a hit movie, concerns the 'storm of the century' that happened in October 1991 off the coast of Nova Scotia. The *Andrea Gale* and its six-man crew of fishermen were deluged by one-hundred-foot waves and 120 mile-per-hour winds. Based on radio, dialogue interviews and eyewitness accounts, the book documents the final minutes of the *Andrea Gale*, along with the successful rescues of other several boats. The book also deals with the meteorological background and follow-up damage, while instilling empathy and sympathy for the various victims.

This factual and suspenseful text is an excellent example of realistic, evocative journalism. It is an objective study, first and foremost, of humans fighting the destructive aspects of nature. Secondly, it is an appreciation of true heroism arising from disaster. *The Perfect Storm* might stimulate research on a number of topics, including the history of the fishing industry, the science of storm prediction, and naval rescue procedures.

Plot, characterization, suspense, setting, atmosphere, point of view and irony are writing elements that could be analyzed closely.

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Publishers, 2000
Harper Torch edition
[original 1997]
344 pages

ISBN 0-06-101351-X

PLANET OF THE APES

Pierre Boulle

Planet of the Apes, a 21st century tale, is about three astronauts who land on a planet that resembles Earth, but with one crucial difference: the planet is ruled by intelligent, cultured apes, while humans are wild, mute and used for scientific research. After being captured during a terrifying manhunt and locked in a cage, the first-person narrator, Ulysse Merou, tries to become the self-appointed saviour of humankind. Studying his simian captors and learning their language, Ulysse struggles to convince the apes that he possesses intelligence and reason.

Planet of the Apes prompts readers to re-examine notions about the relationship between humans and animals on Earth. Boulle's satire is witty and moving. This social commentary is a quick read and would be ideal for personal and creative response work.

> *"I kiss my son with passion, without allowing myself to think of the clouds gathering over our heads. He will be a man, a proper man, I'm sure. Intelligence sparkles in his features and in his eyes. I have revived the sacred flame. Thanks to me, a new human race is rising and will bloom on this planet." p. 251*

Toronto, ON: Random
House of Canada Ltd., 2001
Del Rey/Ballantine Books
edition
[original 1963]
268 pages

ISBN 0–345–44798–0

THE RUNNER

Cynthia Voigt

"*Strong and hard—in your spirit—pitiless and ruthless, that too. Alone. They were men of bronze. I thought, when I first met you, that it was curious to meet such a man when he was a boy. In a different time of history—do you know? You captured my imagination, to see how you would grow up.*" *p. 144*

Set in a small rural community in North Carolina, ***The Runner*** tells the story of Bullet, a young man from a dysfunctional family who struggles to maintain his self-worth by becoming a top, cross-country runner. His father is overly restrictive, his siblings have run away from home, and his mother acquiesces to whatever his father wishes. In this loveless existence, Bullet retains his sanity through stoicism, self-discipline and exercise. His relationship with a black runner allows Bullet to deal with his own racial prejudice and stereotyping. It is untimely that the Vietnam war ends Bullet's struggle to escape from his father's domination.

The story accurately reflects the racist language and social climate and attitudes of the times, focusing on the racial tension in the United States of the 1960s, the integration-segregation issue, and the Vietnam war. Through full class, small group, or individual study, students should appreciate how the author skillfully illustrates breaking down barriers through communication and understanding.

New York, NY: Fawcett
Juniper, 1986
[original 1985]

ISBN 0449702944

Awards:

Silver Pencil Award (Dutch), 1988

Deutscher Jugend Literatur Preis, 1989

RYAN WHITE: MY OWN STORY

Ryan White and Ann Marie Cunningham

Ryan White: My Own Story is the biography of a hemophiliac who is determined to live a normal life. However, at age 13, he is diagnosed with AIDS as a result of receiving contaminated blood while being treated for hemophilia. Ryan recounts his experiences with being shunned by friends, barred from attending school, the legal battle to return to school, and having to move to another community. Before his death, at age 16, Ryan was befriended by a number of celebrities who helped publicize his difficulties and the plight of many AIDS patients.

Biographies of teenagers are rare, and Ryan's widely publicized fight for fair treatment should interest many students. His ability to cope with a life-threatening and socially unacceptable disease is a strength of the book.

Teachers should be prepared to discuss frankly the issue of AIDS, if this nonfiction work is selected. The candid discussion of discrimination faced by Ryan and his family offers many possibilities for comment on an important social issue.

> *"The Concerned Citizens even tried to have our county's welfare director declare Mom an unfit mother, take me away from her, and make me a ward of the court. Then, they figured, the court would keep me out of school. They said by letting me go to school, Mom was allowing me to kill other kids—and even to be killed myself if I picked up some illness from them!" pp. 131–132*

New York, NY: Signet, 1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 0451173228

SHOELESS JOE

W. P. Kinsella

> "'And then you not only see, but hear, and smell, and taste, and touch whatever is closest to your heart's desire. Your secret dreams that grow over the years like apple seeds sown in your belly, grow up through you in leafy wonder and finally sprout through your skin, gentle and soft and wondrous, and they breath and have a life of their own...'
> 'You've done this?'
> 'A time or two.'"
> p. 84

In ***Shoeless Joe***, Ray Kinsella, a small time farmer with a mission, dreams that he is destined to build a baseball stadium to which his hero, Shoeless Joe Jackson, will come to play ball. Ray begins his quest, makes a baseball field, brings J. D. Salinger to his farm, and watches as the ghosts of great players from the 1920s arrive to replay timeless games. Ray's conversations with the spirits of past baseball heroes are nostalgic and unusual, as the ghosts are able to right the wrongs of the past. Ray dreams of correcting errors from the past, and thereby achieving self-fulfillment.

An interesting blend of fantasy and history, this well-crafted novel allows students the opportunity to reflect on the power of dreams and on the possibility of attaining them. The many allusions and interesting characterizations may be best suited to small group or individual study.

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, 1983
[original 1982]

ISBN 0345342569

Awards:

Books in Canada First Novel Award, 1983

Canadian Authors Association prize, 1983

SOMETHING FOR JOEY

Richard E. Peck

Something for Joey is the story of Joey Cappelletti who is a victim of leukemia. This story tells of himself and his brother John, their mutual love and support, and their struggle to overcome life's hurdles.

John was a football halfback at Pennsylvania State University. Joey was a feisty 8-year-old who idolized his older brother. When Joey was diagnosed with leukemia, his parents put him on an experimental treatment program. An attack of chicken pox put him into a coma. With constant stimulation from family members, Joey slowly revived from his unconscious state. Meanwhile, John's popularity and skill grew with each football game.

Peck skillfully draws the parallel between Joey's fight to overcome his infirmity and John's struggle to reach professional standards in football. Joey is able to travel to New York to watch his brother win the Heisman Trophy. An emotional climax is reached when John presents the trophy to his ailing brother.

The author writes in an easy-flowing, conversational manner, showing the Cappelletti family's strength and love for one another during a time of crisis. This story provides an opportunity to look at the family unit—its strengths and its weaknesses. Students who have experienced a death in the family, or know someone who suffers from a life-threatening illness, may need support during the discussion of this book.

> *"...she was right about his not being needed at home. It would be much better for him to concentrate on a contribution to Joey's happiness that the others couldn't make. Everyone knew how Joey lived for the Penn State football games.*
> *After Joey's success at learning to walk all over again, it was now John's turn to repay his fierce determination."* p. 66

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, Inc., 1978

ISBN 0553142259

A THIEF OF TIME

Tony Hillerman

"'Did she say which one?' Leaphorn asked. Here might be an explanation of how she had vanished. If she had been dealing directly with a pot hunter, he might have had second thoughts. Might have thought he had sold her evidence that would put him in prison. Might have killed her when she came back for more." p. 114

In ***A Thief of Time*** noted anthropologist, Dr. Eleanor Freidman-Bernal, walks into a moonlit canyon of Anasazi pictographs and hears the flute sounds of Kokopelli, the "Humpbacked Flute Player" god of those vanished, ancient people. That night, the Anasazi are not the only missing people. Dr. Freidman-Bernal herself vanishes, which brings Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn and Officer Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police onto the scene to investigate her disappearance. When two bodies later appear amid bones at an ancient burial site, Leaphorn and Chee must rely on their own knowledge of history, archeology, religion and the "Navajo way" to solve the murders and find the missing Eleanor.

The protagonists, Leaphorn and Chee, are strong, well-developed characters who do not fall into the category of stock or stereotype "Natives." They exhibit the full range of human emotions and provide much for the study of character development in this novel.

This is a detective novel that blends strong characterization with a riveting plot to create empathy and respect for the Navajo people and their complex culture. Hillerman takes great care in creating, with precise details, the intricacies and nuances of Navajo social and family structures, and their religion.

New York, NY: Harper & Row,
Publishers, Inc., 1990
[original 1988]

ISBN 0061000043

TISHA: THE STORY OF A YOUNG TEACHER IN THE ALASKA WILDERNESS

Robert Specht

In ***Tisha***, Anne Hobbs, a 19-year-old school teacher from Colorado, moves to the isolated gold mining community of Chicken, Alaska. There she finds herself the centre of interest and curiosity.

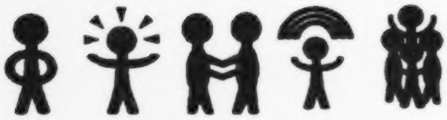
Few of her nine pupils, from Grade 1 to Grade 8, have formal schooling or knowledge of the outside world. In the beginning, she pleases students and parents alike. She gains her nickname, Tisha, from one young student who couldn't say "teacher." However, as time passes, community animosity grows toward Anne as a result of her adoption of two Native children, and her romantic relationship with a young male Métis.

Based on a true story, Specht constructs a realistic scenario, using techniques of fictional writing, emphasizing action and character conflict. This biography introduces some controversial issues concerning the cultural differences amongst the inhabitants of Chicken. Teachers should be aware that this book may evoke discussion concerning racism, stereotyping and isolation.

> *"The longer I stood there listening to the whole bunch of them talking about Chuck and Ethel as if they were dirt, the more I wanted them. Maybe it was because nobody had ever wanted me either when I was a little kid—nobody except Granny. They needed somebody to take care of them, and I could do it."*
> *p. 221*

Toronto, ON: Bantam
Books, 1977
[original 1976]

ISBN 0553145662



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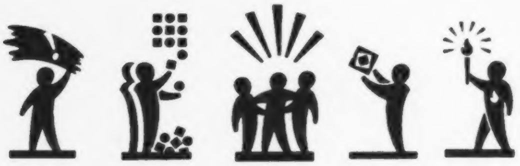
English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



APOLLO 13

Jim Lovell and Jeffrey Kluger

> *"Swigert checked the panels and saw that there appeared to be an abrupt and inexplicable loss of power in what the crew called main bus B ... If one bus lost power, it meant that half the systems in the spacecraft could suddenly go dead. 'Hey,' Swigert shouted down to Houston, 'we've got a problem here.'"*
> *p. 103*

Apollo 13 was previously published as ***Lost Moon: The Perilous Voyage of Apollo 13***. This popular reprint is one of the more accessible books on space travel ever written. Specifically, it is an account of the problem-filled 1970 Apollo mission to the moon. Co-author Jim Lovell was an astronaut on the mission who was afterward named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year. He tells about a mysterious explosion that led to power and oxygen failure and the subsequent famous radio message: "Houston, we have a problem." This adventure is narrated chronologically with dates and times, and the book also includes photographs and an Afterword on events after splashdown.

Apollo 13 is an inspiring study of heroism and courage. The main focus is the rescue itself, as the crew goes through various crises but survive because of cooperation and overwhelming human effort. The book uses ironic humour, occasional technical language, and minor examples of coarse language to convey the events and the mood of the story.

Apollo 13 would be a good choice for students who have a strong scientific interest or for programs where courses are taught interdepartmentally.

New York, NY:
Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1995
Pocket Books edition
[original 1994]
418 pages

ISBN 0-671-53464-5

THE ASH GARDEN

Dennis Bock

The Ash Garden is a three-character fictional view of the bombing of Hiroshima and its profound, long-term effects. Anton is a proud German physicist who works at Los Alamos. Sophie is his young wife who fled from the Nazis and ended up quarantined on a ship in the Atlantic. Emiko is a six-year-old girl who is playing on a riverbank when the atomic bomb goes off, and later ends up as a documentary filmmaker after receiving corrective surgery. The destinies of all three characters are interwoven through the use of alternating points of view.

Bock's focus is the moral ambiguities of war and how humans learn to live with tragic events of history. The book does not lay blame, but instead emphasizes, as Anton states, that "We have all paid." The war topic is timely, relevant and helpful in showing how humans cope with adversity and suffering. This is also a useful novel for teaching character development, point of view, plot structure, and the influence of plot on character.

Teachers should be aware that some communities might find offence in some of the language and references to sexuality, race/ethnicity and people with disabilities. There is a brief, contextualized and thematically-relevant description of Sophie's physical emergence into womanhood.

"I know the world requires a certain payment from us all, pain and suffering, hunger, destitution, solitude, for the freedoms we enjoy. We have all paid. Or will. It is not right or wrong to have used the bomb. But it was necessary." p. 203

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins Canada, 2001
First Perennial Canada edition
281 pages

ISBN 0–00–648545–6

THE BEAN TREES

Barbara Kingsolver

> *"'To hear you tell it, you'd think man was only put on this earth to keep urinals from going to waste.' 'That's not true, I like Estevan.' My heart sort of bumped when I said this. I knew exactly how it would look on an EKG machine: two little peaks and one big one.*
>
> *'He's taken. Who else?' 'Just because I don't go chasing after every Tom's Harry Dick that comes down the pike.' 'Who else?'" p. 112*

In ***The Bean Trees***, Taylor Greer escapes rural Kentucky in a dilapidated '55 Volkswagen. She arrives in Tucson, Arizona at an auto repair shop called "Jesus Is Lord Used Tires," which also doubles as a sanctuary for Central American refugees. En route, she is persuaded to take responsibility for a 3-year-old Native American child whom she names Turtle. Together, they become an unlikely family, bonded by love and optimism, helping others and being helped, as they make their way through life.

Thematically, the book is warm and rich, loving and wise. Trauma is counterbalanced by genuine humanity, and violence is tempered by the warmth of human relationships. Stylistically, the narration is casual and relaxed, but the novel does contain some coarse language and controversial religious references that may be offensive to some readers. The characters are driven by understandable human motives in such a way that they, and the reader, can laugh in spite of some of life's tragedies and injustices.

Although the author deals with the trauma of child sexual abuse, and the distress that comes of abandonment and poverty, these issues are relevant to the plot and consistent with the characterization and development of theme. Teachers may also want to address the issue of inter-racial adoption. The wisdom of the book is simple and clearly drawn. It encourages the reader to acknowledge the power of unexpected alliances and resources.

New York, NY:
HarperPerennial, 1992
[original 1988]

ISBN 0060915544

THE BROKEN CORD

Michael Dorris

The Broken Cord is the story of Michael Dorris, a young bachelor, who adopts Adam. Over the course of the next 15 years, Michael gradually and painfully discovers that his adopted son is epileptic and severely limited developmentally. The challenges of physical and mental limitations strain Michael's resources, and when he marries, family relationships as well. Finally, after years of uncertainty, Adam is diagnosed as a victim of fetal alcohol syndrome, or FAS. The effects of his mother's drinking during pregnancy have been catastrophic to Adam and eventually lead to his death. Adam is unable to imagine, to foresee the consequences of his behaviour, or to remember from one time to the next the results of his actions. As Adam becomes an adult, his adopted parents are less able to protect him from himself and from others.

This account reads like a novel, though it includes scientific evidence and statistics, as well as a brief autobiography of Adam. But most of all, it shines with love and impotent fury for a life destroyed before it was ever lived. Dorris, a well-educated, articulate Native American, draws attention to FAS and its effects. This book is best suited to the mature reader and offers a sensitive yet important issue for students to discuss.

> *"As time passed I blamed racism: negative evaluators underrated Adam because of unconscious, unexpressed negative feelings about minorities. I discounted as 'cultural biased' the IQ tests that consistently scored my son in the upper sixties to low seventies. I periodically concluded that Adam's teachers must be incompetent, badly trained, or lazy when they failed to stimulate his performance in the classroom." p. 65*

New York, NY:
HarperPerennial, 1990
[original 1989]

ISBN 0060916826

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Fedor Dostoevsky

"Kill her, take her money, on condition that you dedicate yourself with its help to the service of humanity and the common good; don't you think that thousands of good deeds will wipe out one little, insignificant transgression? For one life taken, thousands saved from corruption and decay!" p. 62

Crime and Punishment is the story of a murder committed on the principle of the superman who places himself above society. In an effort to prove he is intellectually and morally superior to Russian society, Rodion Raskolinikov brutally murders a pawnbroker and her innocent sister with an axe. The novel traces the psychological breakdown that leads to Raskolinikov's eventual confession and sentence to a Siberian prison.

This classic is a study of the complexities of human psychology. It examines the processes that lead an individual to break under the pressure of a flawed philosophy. Dostoevsky's sinister portrait of life in 19th-century St. Petersburg, with its gloomy tenements and rampant drunkenness, contributes to Raskolinikov's psychological breakdown and adds to the debate of nature versus nurture.

This is a lengthy, complex novel that provides insights into psychology and the nature of human suffering and redemption.

Oxford, England: Oxford
University Press, 1980
[original 1866]

ISBN 0192815490

DAVITA'S HARP

Chaim Potok

In ***Davita's Harp***, Ilanna Davita Chandel is the daughter of David and Channah Chandel. Her father is a nonbelieving Christian, her mother a nonbelieving Jew, and both are Communists. Davita's story begins in pre-World War II Brooklyn, where her parents are workers for the communist cause. Her world is anything but normal. Because of their views, her parents are forced to move from one apartment to another, and their home is always alive with meetings promoting communism. The family is thrown into turmoil when Davita's father is tragically killed in Guernica, Spain while covering the Spanish Civil War as a reporter. Furthermore, when Stalin signs the nonaggression pact with Hitler, Davita's mother becomes disillusioned with communism, which exacerbates her crisis of faith. However, this crisis eventually brings Channah and Davita closer to one another and eventually leads them both back to the mother's Jewish roots.

Students may require extensive background information on the differences between Christianity and Judaism, the Spanish Civil War, and pre-World War II America and Europe. There is one mention of a rape, a scene of sexuality, some violence and a description of a lynching. However, none is gratuitous; each incident helps to shape Davita's character.

Davita and Channah are strong female protagonists who defy or overcome many of the conventions and traditions placed before them. Davita's Harp is a poignant coming-of-age story that may be most appropriate for the mature reader in small group or individual study, or offered on an optional basis.

> *"'You can't forget the bad things that are done to you by telling yourself the world isn't all bad. We really can know only the people and things that touch us. Everything else is like words in a dictionary. We can learn them but they don't live deep inside us. Can you understand that, Ilana?'*
> *'I think so.'*
> *'Religion is a dangerous fraud, Ilana, and an illusion.'"* p. 315

New York, NY: Fawcett
Crest, 1986
[original 1985]

ISBN 0449207757

EINSTEIN'S DREAMS

Alan Lightman

> *"It is a world of impulse. It is a world of sincerity. It is a world in which every word spoken speaks just to that moment, every glance given has only one meaning, each touch has no past or no future, each kiss is a kiss of immediacy."*
> *p. 42*

Einstein's Dreams is a series of poetic meditations on time, written as the fictional dreams of Albert Einstein as he was putting the last touches on his famous theory of relativity. What Lightman's fantasy proposes is that Einstein must have speculated about his theory in the context of his daily life. Einstein's thoughts and impressions are recorded in a series of thirty short, diary-style meditations that present variations on the given theme: in one world, time is circular; in another a man is occasionally plucked from the present and deposited in the past.

This novella is deceptively brief, charmingly and cleverly written, and effectively captures the elusive and illusive aspects of time. *Einstein's Dreams* can be read in its separate 'bits and pieces' or as a cohesive whole. It argues implicitly for more thoughtful, sensitive, conscious living in the here-and-now, and will have a special appeal to students who are beginning to philosophize about life.

New York, NY:
Random House, Inc., 1994
Warner Books edition
[original 1993]
179 pages

ISBN 0–446–67011–1

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

Ernest Hemingway

In ***A Farewell to Arms***, Lieutenant Henry, an American ambulance driver on the Italian front, meets and falls in love with a beautiful English nurse, Catherine Barkley. The intensity of their love is juxtaposed with descriptions of soldiers demoralized by war. It is a story of love amidst a world of chaos, where love and pain co-exist, yet move toward a fatalism that is felt by Henry and Catherine.

War is not glorified, and the soldiers speak with characteristic earthiness and irreverence. Students should be reminded that the novel is set in the trenches of the Italian countryside and stereotyping of women was common at that time. After Hemingway's description of the German attack on Corpetto, a better understanding of the grim realities of a soldier's world is revealed.

Considered to be one of Hemingway's finest novels, *A Farewell to Arms* is focused on the pointlessness of war and is a lyrical novel of great power. It is an intense masculine portrayal of the effects of war, and reveals an attitude and a literary method characterized by Hemingway in the 1930s. The use of rich language and detailed description should be of interest to students, and the contrasting actions of loyalty and desertion should provoke discussion and emphasize the futility and horrors of war. The novel is appropriate for small group discussion and is best suited to the mature reader.

> *"If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward men are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry."*
> *p. 249*

New York, NY: Collier
Books, 1986
[original 1929]

ISBN 0020519001

THE GRAPES OF WRATH

John Steinbeck

"The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the node, you who hate change and fear revolution. Keep these two squatting mean apart; make them hate, fear, suspect each other. Here is the anlage of the thing you fear. This is the zygote. For here "I lost my land" is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate—'We lost our land.' The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one." p. 194

The Grapes of Wrath traces the journey of the Joad family in the mid-1930s from a dried-out Oklahoma tenant farm to the "Promised Land" of California, where they desperately struggle to make a living picking fruit. In spite of the efforts of Ma Joad to keep the family together, the hardships encountered—hunger, sickness, discrimination, exploitation, death—all take their toll.

The Joads are one fictional family intended to represent the thousands who followed the same route and encountered similar problems. Steinbeck, himself, travelled with these migrants in 1937 and published newspaper articles and documentary evidence of their plight. The Grapes of Wrath is a social novel, a vivid protest against the victimization of workers in a time of crisis; yet, despite the grim story line, it is not pessimistic in tone, but rather celebrates the beauty and triumph of the human spirit.

The novel is useful for a variety of teaching purposes: social criticism; in conjunction with parallel Canadian literature about the 1930s; for close study of varied novel techniques, such as the use of interchapters; and for Biblical parallels and symbolism. It lends itself well to small group work, to background research, to the comparison of fiction to documentary, or art to propaganda.

New York, NY: Penguin Books,
1976
[original 1939]

ISBN 0140042393

Awards:

Pulitzer Prize, 1940

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Charles Dickens

Philip Pirrip, the protagonist of ***Great Expectations***, is an orphaned village boy who, through a series of mysterious events, finds himself expecting to become a gentleman. His new-found good fortune takes him to London and elevates his social class, but does nothing to improve his character. The startling discovery of the real source of his fortune, and the eventual recognition of the needs of others, finally shows him the true meaning of "gentleman." By the end of the novel, Pip has become one, in the real sense.

The book could be useful in the study of the novel: structure, character development, point of view, setting, symbolism, style. It relates well to other fiction on the theme of innocence and growth through experience.

Great Expectations is considered by many to be Dickens' greatest literary achievement. It contains the usual Dickensian variety of characters, humour, pathos, mystery, plot complications and suspense. Thus, it sustains reader interest over its considerable length, though it should probably be chosen for the more skilled reader.

> *"'But as she grew and promised to be very beautiful, I gradually did worse, and with my praised, and with my jewels, and with my teachings, and with this figure of myself always before her, a warning to back and point my lesson, I stole her heart away and put ice in its place.'*
>
> *'Better,' I could not help saying, 'to have left her a natural heart, even to be bruised and broken.'"*
> *p. 313*

New York, NY: Bantam
Classic Press, 1958
[original 1861]

ISBN 0553210157

THE HERO'S WALK

Anita Rau Badami

> *"She was losing all that was familiar and beloved, thought Sripathi. He wished then that he could promise her that everything would be all right. He had even reached out to pat her shoulder, to tell her that she would be okay—he was going to take her home to India—but the child had shrunk away from him."*
> *pp. 142–143*

The Hero's Walk is about Sripathi Rao, an unhappy, unremarkable middle-aged man living in Toturpuram, India with his eccentric extended family. His domineering mother is making his life miserable, his son is becoming dangerously involved in political activism, and his daughter has broken off her arranged engagement to a local man in order to marry a white Canadian. At the opening of the book, Sripathi learns his daughter and her husband have died in an auto accident leaving a daughter, seven-year-old Nandana, who reluctantly comes to live with her grandparents. The novel portrays the difficult relationship that forms between the child and her traditional Indian grandparents, and Sripathi's struggle to let go of the failures and tragedies of the past in order to move on with life.

This rich, detailed book captures the atmosphere of East Indian life with warmth, humour and insight. *The Hero's Walk* lends itself to personal response and problem-solving or decision-making work. Teachers need to be aware that the book contains references to domestic violence, sexual activities, masturbation and mercy killing.

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada Ltd., 2001
Vintage Canada edition
[original 2000]
359 pages

ISBN 0-676-97360-4

INTO THIN AIR: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE MOUNT EVEREST DISASTER

Jon Krakauer

Into Thin Air is the nonfiction classic that started a major craze of books about mountaineering and climbing disasters. Jon Krakauer was a journalist-mountain climber who had originally gone to report on the commercialization of the Everest and found a much more dramatic story. During the climb, in May 1996, a freak blizzard overcame the group of twenty climbers, killing five of them and leaving another minus a hand from severe frostbite. Krakauer uses interviews, corroborated details and first-hand accounts (some of which include mildly inappropriate language) in this intense examination of the tragedy.

This book is a fascinating study of humans against the elements of nature, which critically explores the behaviour of the other climbers and Krakauer himself. Perhaps even more so, *Into Thin Air* is about why people are obsessed with climbing a deadly mountain like Everest, and the triumph of desire over common sense. Climbing is presented as an intrinsically irrational activity that can lead to elation and heroism but also hubris, frustration, guilt and death.

Into Thin Air may inspire students to research this specific disaster, similar climbing tragedies or other high-risk endeavours.

> *"If you can convince yourself that Rob Hall died because he made a string of stupid errors and that you are too clever to repeat those same errors, it makes it easier for you to attempt Everest in the face of some rather compelling evidence that doing so is injudicious. In fact, the murderous outcome of 1996 was in many ways simply business as usual." pp. 356–357*

Toronto, ON:
Random House of Canada,
1998
Anchor Books edition
[original 1997]
374 pages

ISBN 0–385–49208–1

THE METAMORPHOSIS

Franz Kafka

"'What a quiet life the family has been leading,' Gregor said to himself, and while he stared rigidly in front of him into the darkness, he felt very proud that he had been able to provide such a life in so nice an apartment for his parents and his sister. But what now if all the peace, the comfort, the contentment were to come to a horrible end?" p. 22

In ***The Metamorphosis***, Gregor Samsa awakens one morning to find himself transformed into a monstrous insect. He has become a "filthy stinking vermin," and is increasingly rejected and ignored by his family and all other persons who encounter him. Confined to his room, excluded from any human relationships, Samsa deteriorates, messily disintegrates, and dies.

The story is often read allegorically: as a depiction of alienation; as a religious parable dealing with the loss of faith; as an indirect version of a psychoanalytical case study of delusion and despair. Biographical comparisons can also be made to Kafka's own circumstances as an Austrian Jew.

The text of *The Metamorphosis* is short, only 58 pages. However, included in this edition is an introduction by the editor–translator, explanatory notes, material by and about Kafka, and a lengthy selection of critical material (much of which may be too specialized for all but advanced students). A selected bibliography is also appended.

Some students may have difficulty accepting the initial, unusual premise. Once it is accepted, however, readers can respond to the story's clarity and its careful use of descriptive detail. Then, various interpretations can be developed, interpretations that need not be either allegorical or biographical.

This work is best suited for advanced students.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,
1986
[original 1915]

ISBN 0553213695

MONSIGNOR QUIXOTE

Graham Greene

Monsignor Quixote is an engaging dialogue between two old friends who are travelling the countryside together. The novel affords the reader the opportunity to explore two apparently diverse points of view, but these marked differences between the characters mask profoundly similar hearts. Father Quixote and his Sancho Panza, an unseated communist mayor, are two innocents abroad in modern Spain, embarked on a journey that humorously, but philosophically, parallels Cervantes' 17th-century story of Don Quixote.

Despite different political, religious, economical, even sexual perspectives, the priest and the mayor are bound together by generosity of spirit, appreciation of creation and a longing for truth. Their friendship and their growth allow the reader to uncover the enigmatic elements of human goodness and moral responsibility to society. Their journey provides background for witty conversation and allows the reader to explore how differences of opinion can lead to strong bonds of friendship. The book is a commentary on the moral person as well as the moral citizen.

Readers should not be put off by the seemingly irreverent treatment of Christianity and the Roman Catholic church. While it may appear that Greene is delving into profound theological issues, he is really dealing with basic human struggles common to all denominations, and is simply using Catholic theology and socialism as the symbolic language of the novel.

In order to understand the difficult references and allusions in this novel, the reader needs to acquire a substantial knowledge of Christianity, Marxism, communism and the Roman Catholic church. It is also recommended that students be aware of tone and theme in the writing styles of both Cervantes and Graham Greene. Time, maturity and critical thinking skills should lead to an understanding of Monsignor Quixote on a symbolic level.

"'You make the world of the future sound like Utopia, father.'

'Oh no, humanism and religion have not done away with either nationalism or imperialism. It's those two that cause wars. ... From unhappy memories too. That's why I'm glad to have the short memory of a priest.'"
p. 125

Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada Limited, 1983
[original 1982]

ISBN 0140065970

THE MOSQUITO COAST

Paul Theroux

> *"We drove past Tiny Polski's mansion house to the main road, and then the five miles into Northampton, Father talking the whole way about savages and the awfulness of America—how it got turned into a dope-taking, door-locking, ulcerated danger zone of rabid scavengers and criminal millionaires and moral sneaks."* *p. 3*

In ***The Mosquito Coast***, Allie Fox packs up his family and escapes the capitalist world of America for the Mosquito Coast. An eccentric misfit in the United States, he transfers his inventive way of life to his new world. Allie believes that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," and therein lies the motivation for his personal pilgrimage and his attempts to overpower others. Theroux interweaves the physical and metaphorical details of the deliverance of this family in such a way as to engage the reader in their isolation and turmoil. Allie is abusive but spellbinding in his eccentricity. The narrator, his son Charlie, is one of his victims, and yet Charlie's experiences are also his adventures. Although exploited by his father, Charlie's confusions are both understandable and compelling.

The Mosquito Coast is a powerful social satire because the control exercised by the self-centred Allie Fox parallels the rapid industrialization of the western world. He leads himself to self-destruction, taking with him those he loves. The novel can be a vehicle for an exploration of many issues in our technological and capitalistic society. Because religious references may be controversial in some communities, and the treatment of theme and character are earthy and sometimes vulgar, the novel may be most appropriate for mature students, or offered on an optional basis. This is a story of desperation and the breakdown of individuals and society.

New York, NY: Avon Books,
1983
[original 1982]

ISBN 0380619458

Awards:

James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Best Novel, 1981

NIGHT

Elie Wiesel

"I ran off to look for my father. And at the same time I was afraid of having to wish him a Happy New Year when I no longer believed in it. He was standing near the wall, bowed down, his shoulders sagging as though beneath a heavy burden. I went up to him, took his hand and kissed it. A tear fell upon it. Whose was that tear? Mine? His? I said nothing. Nor did he. We had never understood one another so clearly." p. 65

Night is the terrifying account of a Nazi death camp as told by survivor Elie Wiesel. Wiesel was still a teenager when he was taken from his home in Sighet, Transylvania, to the Auschwitz concentration camps and then to Buchenwald. The horror turned this young Jewish boy into an agonized witness to the death of his family, the death of innocence and the death of his God. Even through all this, the story is one of hope and bravery. Night is a warning to humankind to ensure that such an atrocity never happens again.

Teachers should undertake the teaching of this novel with considerable preparation and care. The topic is, by its very nature, a sensitive one. The descriptions of violence and cruelty may be objectionable to some students and community members; however, they reinforce that the treatment of Jews in concentration camps during World War II was focused on humiliation, suffering and deprivation. Some of the scenes are particularly unnerving and depressing. Reference is made to cultured people who were victims of genocide while the world remained silent.

Although this personal account deals with an historical event, the issues are timeless—man's inhumanity to man, the struggle to survive against all odds, and the hope that such things will never happen again.

Through a series of short, powerful, painful glimpses, its pace and style make Wiesel's story agonizing and convincing. This excellent cross-curricular book could lead to related research about genocide today. The book is suitable for full class, small group or individual study.

New York, NY: Bantam
Books, 1982
[original 1958]

ISBN 0553272535

OSCAR PETERSON: THE WILL TO SWING

Gene Lees

> *"So just remember one thing, Mr. Higgins, when you go up there to play, don't compare yourself to me or anyone else. You play your music your way, and play it the best you have in you, every set, every night. That's called professionalism."*
> *p. 149*

In ***Oscar Peterson: The Will to Swing***, Gene Lees examines the challenges and struggles that a young black man faced as he worked to become one of the world's greatest jazz pianists. Oscar Peterson, from Montreal, became an internationally known musician while still in his 20s.

Peterson is characterized as a positive role model. He works hard, he actively fights to combat racism, and he exemplifies those who lack economic advantages and still succeed. However, some students may be offended by the coarse language and examples of racial discrimination and prejudice that appear in this work, and should critically examine these instances as well as the negative behaviours of some of the individuals presented. The book promotes the idea that people of all racial/ethnic groups can achieve and interact positively.

The content of the book should be interesting to those students with musical interests and would be most appropriate for either small group or individual study.

Toronto, ON: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1988

ISBN 0886191297

THE OUTSIDER

Albert Camus

The Outsider was first published in French in 1942 as ***L'Étranger***. *Meursault*, a young man in the French colony of Algiers, tells the story of the last year of his life. With almost equal emphasis—or lack of it—he describes his mother's funeral, a casual affair with a woman, his acquaintance with a neighbour and his dog, a day at the beach, his killing of an Arab under the hot sun, his trial and conviction, and his last thoughts in prison before his execution.

The simple, frank and unemotional narration reflects a man who refuses to "play the game": to pretend more than he feels, to lie, to judge himself or others. He is, therefore, seen as a threat to a conventional colonial society, to the legal system, and to the Christian church. As a result, he is condemned to death as much for his refusal to conform as for his killing of the Arab. Meursault is an example of what Camus calls "the Absurd Hero," one who finds himself a stranger in an indifferent universe, and who does not require explanation of or justification for his existence, but rather, accepts the simple fact of life itself.

The novel is short and deceptively simple in narration. Its unconventional protagonist, unexpected development and strangely flat style attracts the interest of students and stimulates thoughtful discussion and evaluation of the existential view of life. It is also useful in the study of novel techniques: structure, style, character development, and social and metaphysical themes.

> *"The prosecutor then rose, looking very grave, and in a voice which I thought sounded truly emotional, and with a finger pointing in my direction, he slowly pronounced, 'Gentlemen of the jury, on the day after the death of his mother, this man was swimming in the sea, entering into an irregular liaison and laughing at a Fernandel film. I have nothing more to say to you.' He sat down, still amid silence." p. 91*

London, England: Penguin
Books, 1983
[original 1942]

ISBN 0140180184

PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK

Annie Dillard

> *"The mating rites of mantises are well known: a chemical produced in the head of the male insect says, in effect, 'No, don't go near her, you fool, she'll eat you alive.' At the same time a chemical in his abdomen says, 'Yes, by all means, now and forever yes.' While the male is making up what passes for his mind, the female tips the balance in her favor by eating his head."*
> *p. 57*

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek is a season-by-season series of Annie Dillard's personal observations of nature. She says of herself, "I am above all an unscrupulous observer." They centre on a poet and naturalist's "receptiveness and concentration" on the countryside around Tinker Creek, Virginia and range from minute observations of such phenomena as caddis fly larvae to speculations about the principle of indeterminacy, or Einstein's "holy curiosity" about the nature of the Universe.

There is a passing allusion to a "simple and cruel Eskimo tale" (source, Farley Mowat) that is effective in a disturbing way. This work alludes mainly to male philosophers, artists and scientists but this is counterbalanced by the overall strong and sensitive voice of the woman who is writing. Dillard's style is lucid, often witty, and personal. The writer moves calmly, and often poetically, from the concrete to the abstract, from observation to introspection. The scientific eye is balanced by a very human approach and a reverence for the dignity of all forms of life.

Since the whole work may demand more staying power than can be expected from all but the most able and determined readers, teachers might consider using excerpts from this book. Passages from it would be excellent as models for the teaching of writing and for developing "the secret of seeing," which lies behind most effective writing.

New York, NY:
HarperPerennial, 1985
[original 1974]

ISBN 0060915455

Awards:

Pulitzer Prize, 1975

Best Foreign Book Award (France), 1990

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Jane Austen

This opening statement from ***Pride and Prejudice*** neatly combines the typical Austen subject matter, the search for a suitable marriage partner, with the ironic tone of the novel:

"It is truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet of Longbourne, Hertfordshire, with an estate entailed on a fatuous male cousin, have five unmarried daughters, and so the quest for wealthy husbands for at least the two oldest daughters is a serious matter. The arrival in the neighbourhood of an eligible young bachelor, Mr. Bingley, sets all the mothers atwitter and scheming. The eldest and most beautiful Bennet daughter, Jane, seems a perfect choice for Bingley, but the plot of the novel centres on her sister, the lively and opinionated Elizabeth, and Bingley's supercilious and aristocratic friend, Darcy. Pride and prejudice—on both sides—complicate the plot.

This classic novel is probably the best known, and most popular, of the Austen canon. It can be read not only for its story but studied for its fictional techniques, especially the development of character by speech and gesture, and a subtly controlled ironic style. This edition contains a substantial introduction, a select bibliography, Austen's chronology and some explanatory notes.

"'I might as well enquire,' replied she, 'why with so evident a design of offending and insulting me, you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character? Was not this some excuse for incivility, if I was uncivil? But I have other provocations. You know I have."
p. 169

Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1990
[original 1813]

ISBN 019282760X

THE REPUBLIC OF NOTHING

Lesley Choyce

> *"The island needed saving and it needed it now. Not tomorrow. Not after some goddamn election or after a dozen cabinet meetings. My father had started out in politics as an anarchist, but now he was something else that I didn't care to think about." p. 277*

The Republic of Nothing is set in the 1950s in Whalebane, a small island off of Nova Scotia that has declared itself an independent republic without a government. Ian, the narrator, tells of the eccentric islanders with offbeat, character-driven humour. This tone is set early with an incident involving a missing G on a typewriter, to be followed by similar odd moments such as when the moon talks to a villager or when a dead elephant washes ashore.

This novel is an excellent example of wry Canadian humour that examines themes of family struggle, independence and political idealism. It is an imaginative and entertaining piece of Maritime writing that presents a catalogue of human foibles from a patently satirical perspective. To benefit most from *The Republic of Nothing,* students will require maturity, a sense of irony and a willingness to imaginatively "go with" the text.

The inclusion of a graphic description of sex, as well as coarse language and references to drugs and abortion, may be problematic to some students and community members.

Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane,
1994
363 pages

ISBN 0-864-92153-5

SAINT MAYBE

Anne Tyler

Baltimore, Maryland is the home of the ideal, "all-American" family, the Bedloes, the subject of the novel ***Saint Maybe***. However, this idyllic world is soon shattered when Ian, the youngest child, learns a secret that has tragic consequences for Dan, his older brother. This tragedy alters Ian, sending him on a lifelong and painful search for redemption. His journey begins at "The Church of the Second Chance" whose theology expounds that forgiveness is not given freely, but must be earned. After years of arduous labour, Ian finally gains his redemption when he meets Rita, marries her, and they have a child.

> *"'God wants to know how far you'll go to undo the harm you've done.'*
> *'But He wouldn't really make me follow through with it,' Ian said.*
> *'How else would He know then?'*
> *'Wait,' Ian said. 'You're saying God would want me to give up my education. Change all my parents' plans for me and give up my education.'*
> *'Yes, if that's what's required,' Reverend Emmett said." p 133*

In typical Tyler fashion, the characters in *Saint Maybe* are quirky and off-beat, yet are easily understood and accepted by the reader. Some characters, however, are presented as stock figures. For example, the Bedloes have a series of "Middle Eastern" neighbours, university students, who are never named, and are portrayed as people who never seem to adapt to "Western standards," yet become part of the Bedloes' extended family. Students could examine whether or not Tyler does this to ridicule a particular ethnic group, or is she using satire as a way of examining society's views toward immigrants.

Tyler also uses many religious references to depict Ian's quest for forgiveness and makes his religion one of the focal points of the novel. When pre-reading, the teacher should consider possible community concerns about the ethic or religious references Tyler presents. During novel study, students should critically examine these issues as well as the references to foreigners, particularly those of Middle Eastern origin.

Overall, this is an excellent novel to use in examining character development, an individual's search for redemption, and the evolution of family.

Toronto, ON: Penguin
Books Canada Ltd., 1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 0140159592

STEPHEN HAWKING: QUEST FOR A THEORY OF EVERYTHING

Kitty Ferguson

> *"In the academic world physicists continued to express tremendous respect for Hawking but were a little nonplussed by all the media hype. It didn't take higher math to multiply book sales figures in the millions.... There was the occasional hint of sour grapes, a half-suppressed mutter of 'His work's no different from a lot of other physicists: it's just that his condition makes him interesting.'"* p. 137

Stephen Hawking: Quest for a Theory of Everything is an account of the life and work of Stephen Hawking, eminent physicist of the 20th century who is diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) at the age of 20. His quest for truth in the world of theoretical physics becomes a triumph of the spirit and mind over extreme physical disability.

Hawking's search, discoveries and theories are discussed in relatively simple terms. Numerous clarifying diagrams are provided, as well as a glossary at the end, which will aid the reader in understanding. His quest covers the exploration and explanation for "a theory of everything," which is nothing short of an explanation of the Universe and everything that happens within it.

This biography should be of special interest to students fascinated by physics, science or science fiction. Research projects could follow, such as group studies of "people who have made a difference." Students not particularly interested in science might still become involved in the biographical material of a brilliant and courageous man. A glossary, to assist with some of the scientific terms, is included at the end of this edition.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,
1992
[original 1991]

ISBN 055329895X

THE STONE ANGEL

Margaret Laurence

The Stone Angel tells of the last few days in the life of Hagar Shipley, a proud, stubborn old woman of 90. Age has rendered her incapable of living independently, she bitterly resents the assistance she requires, and she struggles to escape from her son's home. Her tired old mind wanders into the past, calling into life, once more, the people—especially the men—who have been important to her. Her father, from whom she inherited her stubborn pride and inability to express the softer side of her nature; her husband, who died never suspecting her unspoken love; her favourite son, John, willful and unmanageable like herself, are all dead now. Only Marvin, her eldest son, is left, and when she finally forces herself to voice the approval he longs to hear, the words are a lie. Hagar dies as she has lived—proud and independent.

> *"I can't change what's happened to me in my life, or make what's not occurred take place. But I can't say I like it, or accept it, or believe its for the best. I don't and never shall, not even if I'm damned for it." p. 160*

From a technical point of view, this novel provides good material for the study of plot structure, point of view, symbolism, characterization, and effective use of stylistic devices. Central among these devices is the stone angel, which Hagar's father has erected, ostensibly a memorial to his dead wife, but more truthfully, as a monument to his own pride and a symbol of Hagar herself.

The characters are interesting and convincing, and together they offer a realistic portrayal of human nature. The background provides a view of western Canadian life from the 1920s through to the 1960s. Student discussion of the novel could consider the extent to which Hagar is individual and idiosyncratic, or representative of elderly women of her time and place.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1968
[original 1964]

ISBN 0771091591

THE STONE CARVERS

Jane Urquhart

> *“‘There is absolutely nothing,’ he told her, ‘like the carving of names. Nothing like committing to the stone this record of someone who is utterly lost.’” p. 347*

The Stone Carvers spans three decades at the beginning of the 20th century and geographically moves from Ontario to the battlefields of France in an exploration of loss, war and the healing power of art. Klara Becker, the daughter of an Ontario woodcarver, is haunted by a love affair with a boy who died in World War I. She remains a spinster but finds comfort through carving. Years later, her mysterious brother and she reunite and travel to Walter Allward's monument to fallen Canadian soldiers at Vimy, France, where they both experience epiphanies on war and try to rebuild their lives.

Thematically, this award-winning book is about the need to remember, the sweep of history, the futility of war, and the redemption that emerges through art. An intelligent and spellbinding novel, *The Stone Carvers* is simply written and appropriate for most English Language Arts 30-1 classes.

As pre-reading, teachers may wish to provide historical background on Vimy Ridge, the war memorial, and the role of Canadians during WWI. Teachers should be aware that the book contains profanity, violence and references to the sexual behaviour of the characters.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Ltd., 2001
390 pages

ISBN 0–7710–8685–7

TO DESTROY YOU IS NO LOSS

Joan D. Criddle and Teeda Butt Mam

To Destroy You Is No Loss is a compassionate biography that tells of a Cambodian family's ordeal during the Khmer Rouge holocaust in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. The preface gives an excellent background to the events leading up to and during the holocaust. The book, itself, traces the life of one very courageous young woman, Teeda Butt Mam, and her family during those years of servitude and genocide while Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge held the country in a death grip. Following the fall of the Pol Pot, the family become refugees and find their way to the United States. The co-author, Joan Criddle, helps sponsor the Butt family's emigration to America. She dedicates the book "To Teeda and her family for a willingness to recount painful experiences, to make their ordeal public, in order that we might understand."

Students who are concerned with the politics of the Asiatic world, who wish to study political leaders and societies, who wish to learn more about the Cambodians among us, who are interested in world refugee problems, and who are concerned with man's humanity or inhumanity to man, should be interested in this book.

A remarkable "tour de force" that demonstrates the strength of the human will to survive, this biography would fit well in a humanities program.

> *"Slowly and painfully, the dazed woman had pried herself from the tangle of arms and legs, crawled over the bodies and made her escape. She had subsisted on grubs and roots since then. For five days, Vitou and his friend had risked detection by bringing food to her.*
>
> *When it became known in the village that several victims had survived, and were hiding among the nut trees, the leaders first threatened death to any villager who aided them." p. 165*

New York, NY: Doubleday,
1989
[original 1987]

ISBN 0385266286

TOUCH THE EARTH: A SELF-PORTRAIT OF INDIAN EXISTENCE

T. C. McLuhan

"We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth as 'wild.' Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery." p. 45

Touch the Earth is a sepia photo-illustrated compilation of speeches and excerpts from documents, all told in the voice of the North American Indian, many of whom, like Chief Joseph, Tecumseh and Geronimo, are well-known historical figures. Their voices range in tone from the nostalgic and philosophical, to the bitter and defiant.

The material spans a century and records the Native view of the white man's betrayal of nature and of an indigenous race. Section headings indicate the range of topic and tone: "The Morning Sun, the New Sweet Earth and the Great Silence"; "The Hairy Man from the East"; "My Voice Is Become Weak"; "If We Surrender, We Die." Early parts of the book reinforce the closeness of the Native to the land and provoke interest in a time of increasing concern about the environment.

The book promotes an empathy toward Native peoples and provides for increased understanding of the spiritual significance of many facets of Native life. There is, however, a marked imbalance. All Natives are perceived positively; almost all Caucasians are stereotyped negatively. While this might be seen as a restoring of the balance against the negative stereotyping of the Native in past literature and history, teachers should be aware that Touch the Earth is not suitable as a whole "stand-alone" resource. Its bias should be recognized and the book used only if accompanied by other material and activities, either to balance the "white view" often historically presented, or with literature that reveals some examples of Caucasians who have interacted positively with Native people. The book may be most appropriate for either small group or individual study.

The voices in this book are powerful, but students should be aware that they are not reading a balanced history, but a personal, literary and artistic view of history. The language is often lyrical and passionate and, as a sort of anthology of prose poetry, the book lends itself to oral reading of selections.

New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1971

ISBN 0671222759

TRUTH AND BRIGHT WATER

Thomas King

Truth and Bright Water is a fun and easy-to-read novel by one of Canada's most respected Aboriginal authors. It tells of two young cousins, Tecumseh and Lum, who live in both a small American town called Truth, and a reserve across the border called Bright Water. While Lum attempts to win the Indian Days race and run away from his past and an abusive parent, Tecumseh tries to figure out his own family.

This humourous novel is written in King's characteristically plain, poetic and comic style. The book explores themes of love, betrayal, reconciliation, self-discovery and the search for purpose. For non-Aboriginal readers, this will be a delightful, educational excursion into Aboriginal imagination and perspectives.

The book contains extensive use of questionable language, as well as references to sexual activities, suicide, environmental issues, authority and corporal punishment. Some of these issues may be offensive to students and members of the community.

> *"... maybe the bluff was once a burial ground. Maybe at one time we buried our dead there and then forgot about it. Maybe if you dug down a little in the grass and the clay, you'd find entire tribes scattered across the prairies. Such things probably happen all the time. A little rain, a little wind, and a skull just pops out of the ground."* p. 73

Toronto, ON:
HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.,
1999
Harper Canada Perennial
edition
282 pages

ISBN 0-00-648196-5

UNDER THE RIBS OF DEATH

John Marlyn

> *"He crossed his legs stubbornly. Some day, he thought, he would show them. Some day he would own a house that would make this one look like a shack. The time would come when he would throw a party and the people he invited wouldn't have to bring their own food, either. That was a dirty trick—inviting you to come and eat your own food."*
> *p. 42*

Under the Ribs of Death tells the story of a young immigrant boy as he struggles to become Anglicized in Winnipeg during the late 1920s. Although Sander is Hungarian, he could be any immigrant from anywhere, and the story follows him through poverty to success and to poverty once again. In his quest for wealth, Sander rejects his family, friends and ethics—only to regain these values, love of family, spiritual goals, and a sense of pride and dignity—when he once more finds himself indigent.

The novel reflects the social mores of the era and deals with the non-Anglo immigration experience through stereotypes of the "English" and the "foreigner." In so doing, the prejudices of English Canadians, and the effects of the Great Depression are revealed. The writing style uses examples of dour humour contrasted with expressions of despair and poverty. While there is some blasphemy, it is used to reveal the despair of the characters.

This novel provides opportunity for discussion regarding theme, point of view, irony and characterization. Sander's struggle for identity reveals the ironic need to be simultaneously independent and dependent.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1990
[original 1957]

ISBN 0771098669

THE WARS

Timothy Findley

In ***The Wars***, Robert Ross, a gentle 19-year-old Canadian, experiences the horrors and personal dilemmas of war as a young officer in France during World War I. He undergoes moral and physical violation, and makes personally courageous but politically treasonous decisions, which lead to court-martial. The novel is a strong and sensitive condemnation of all "wars" against the human spirit. In the midst of death, Ross is a young man committed to, and affirming of, the value of all life. Findley is critical of organized religion and, although he doesn't emphasize it, it is clear he doubts the ability of the church to respond meaningfully in times of either public or private crisis. Robert's mother, an alcoholic who suffers terribly over Robert's involvement with the war, derives little comfort from the church. There are two explicitly sexual scenes that may need to be considered if selecting this novel. One is set in a brothel near Lethbridge where Robert observes his war hero, Captain Taffler, in a homosexual act; another is the gang-rape of Robert by his fellow officers, in the officers' dark steam bath. Both scenes, however, are essential to the development of the central character and to the themes of the novel. Because of the religious and sexual references, the book might be best offered on an optional basis. As a novel study, *The Wars* is interesting for its unique narrative structure: the use of different points of view as collected by a contemporary researcher, through clippings, photographs, letters and interviews. Shifts in time may cause some initial reader confusion, but the purpose soon becomes clear. In spite of its serious subject matter, the novel is fast-paced, immensely readable, and written with a sure, fine touch.

> *"I know what you want to do. I know you're going to go away and be a soldier. Well—you can go to hell. I'm not responsible. I'm just another stranger." p. 28*

Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1978
[original 1977]

ISBN 0140050116

Awards:

Governor General's Award for fiction in English, 1977

City of Toronto Book Award, 1977

WILD GEESE

Martha Ostenso

> *"She straightened like a flash and flung it with all her strength at Caleb's head. Her eyes closed dizzily, and when she opened them again he was crouching before her, his hand moving across his moustache. The ax was buried in the rotten wall behind his head."* p. 206

Set on a farm in Northern Manitoba, ***Wild Geese*** portrays the life of Caleb Gare who cruelly suppresses his family. He blackmails his wife with the threat of exposing her illegitimate son, Mark Jordan, to the truth about his real father. The plot is further developed when Mark falls in love with the visiting school teacher, Lind Archer, whose confidante is Jude, Caleb's daughter. Jude's strength and sexuality are contrasted to Lind's delicacy and tenderness. Later, Jude rejects Caleb's belief in the necessity of immigrant hardships, and triumphs over her father's oppression.

The novel provides for an interesting discussion of the family farm as a backdrop for a story of passion and manipulation of power. The characters' emotions are paralleled to the conditions of the land; Caleb is "a spiritual counterpart of the land, as harsh, as demanding, as tyrannical as the very soil from which he drew his existence," and he exerts this power over his family.

The story is set in the period between the arrival of the geese in the spring and their departure in autumn, further symbolizing the natural world as representative of the characters. The novel should provide for interesting discussions on language, character development, symbolism and theme, and is appropriate for full class discussion.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart Inc., 1989
[original 1925]

ISBN 0771099940

WINDFLOWER

Gabrielle Roy

In ***Wildflower***, Elsa, a young Inuit girl, is seduced by an American soldier in Fort Chimo, Northwest Territories. The child who is born, Jimmy, becomes the object of his young mother's devotion. She attempts to immerse him in the Inuit culture, but finally loses him to the white man's world and his wars. Windflower is a translation of La Rivière sans Repos, one of four stories in which Roy depicts the Inuit in an uneasy transition between two worlds, not fully at home in either.

Various themes emerge: the imprisoning effect of material possessions; the brotherhood of man; the cyclic nature of life; and the brief joys of love and motherhood—symbolized by the short-lived tundra windflower.

The novel is short, easy to read, informal in style and clear in structure. It provides a sympathetic insight into the Inuit way of life, which is warmly and compellingly portrayed.

> *"'In the old days,' he reproached her gently, 'you were all carelessness, Elsa, now you're all care. Couldn't you rear your child more simply, as you yourself were reared?'*
> *'In filth!' she said indignantly. 'Eating the guts of animals?'*
> *'You're too quick to go to extremes,' he said. 'It's a question of rearing the boy with care but without the danger of his ever coming to be ashamed of you and Winnie and Thaddeus. Do you understand?'*
> *Quite truthfully, she did not understand."*
> *p. 48*

Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1975
[original 1970]

ISBN 0771092202

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Emily Brontë

> *"You teach me now how cruel you've been—cruel and false. Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you—they'll damn you. You loved me—then what right had you to leave me?" p. 198*

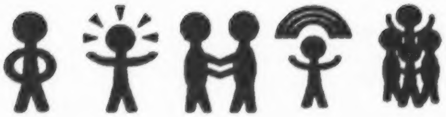
The saga ***Wuthering Heights*** is narrated by a new arrival on the wild Yorkshire moors, John Lockwood, whose informant is his housekeeper, Nelly Dean. She recounts to him, in a series of vivid flashbacks and time shifts, the events making up the troubled love story of Catherine Earnshaw and the dark and passionate Heathcliff—a story of love and vengeance, which passes on to the next generation in the characters of Cathy, the dead Catherine's daughter, and Linton, Heathcliff's son.

The novel can be read as a love story, but at a deeper level, as an exploration of the darker side of human nature. Some readers may find some of the incidents, such as the strangling of a dog, or the hanging of puppies, troubling and distasteful—but they are part of the vein of undeniable cruelty that underlies the human nature portrayed.

This Brontë classic has both a poetic and a moral structure. The intensity of the characters' emotions, the wildness and remoteness of setting, and the Gothic atmosphere, make the novel fascinating and disturbing.

New York, NY: Bantam Classic Press, 1981
[original 1847]

ISBN 0686697278



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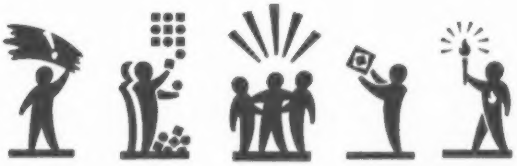
English Language Arts

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Annotated List



ALICIA: MY STORY

Alicia Appleman-Jurman

> *"I felt that old sickening feeling again, and pure hatred for those people. My God, I thought, you people feed me, visit with me, suffer with me for a week, and at the first opportunity you betray me to the Germans. May you all burn in hell, every one of you!" p. 232*

In ***Alicia: My Story***, Alicia, an adolescent Polish Jew, suffers the horrors of living and trying to survive under the Nazis. She sees her mother murdered, and experiences terrible hardships while hiding from the Nazis and their collaborators. Through luck, street sense, and the help of many good people, she is able to hide, survive and maintain her faith in the family and the essential goodness of people. Eventually, she organizes and leads a group who settle in the Palestine region. Later, she marries an American and moves to the United States.

This vivid personal account of survival, and great personal courage, deals with atrocities committed for racial and ethnic reasons; an account of man's inhumanity to man. The topic, by its very nature, may be sensitive in some communities. Teachers should also be aware that this lengthy biography contains some stereotyping of Germans and Ukrainians.

Alicia Appleman-Jurman's autobiography, however, has the potential to broaden understanding and sensitivity to personal sufferings and to holocaust events. While chapters are short, the book may be most appropriate for small group or individual study.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,
1990
[original 1988]

ISBN 0553282182

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

Erich Maria Remarque

"It was that abstraction I stabbed. But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us...." p. 223

In ***All Quiet on the Western Front***, Paul Baumer, a German schoolboy, enlists with his classmates in World War I. Although youthful and optimistic, they lose their childhood, their connection to humankind, and their lives, through years of horror. Paul tries to fight against the hate that destroys all the young people regardless of country or uniform.

Preservation of life and the overcoming of prejudices are the main themes of the novel. The destructive powers of war, both mental and physical, are depicted through the many hardships the soldiers endure. Their struggles are heroic and universal. Classroom discussions can be enriched by the realization that people everywhere are similar, no matter what war they are fighting or cause they are defending.

As in all war stories, there is profanity, violence, sexuality and stereotyping, all necessary for the framework of the novel's setting. War is violent and destructive, and these young boys initially respond in a similar manner, but they also mature, realizing the senselessness of violence and death, and become aware of the need for greater tolerance and understanding in the world.

This novel relates well to the social studies curriculum and is appropriate for full class study.

New York, NY: Fawcett
Crest, 1982
[original 1928]

ISBN 0449213943

BUSH PILOT WITH A BRIEFCASE: THE HAPPY-GO-LUCKY STORY OF GRANT McCONACHIE

Ronald A. Keith

> *"There were damn few breaks in the drab routine. Meals were served at the fish company's cook-house. Good food, lots of meat. Nobody ate fish. The pilots did the cabin housekeeping, which meant sweeping the plank floor once a week. They hauled cordwood from the cook-house woodpile and melted snow in a tub on the stove for drinking, bathing and brewing coffee. In the evening, the crews played bridge or read in the flickering yellow light of the kerosene lamps."* p. 115

Bush Pilot with a Briefcase is the engaging biography of Grant McConachie. From his youth in Edmonton to, at age 38, his rise to president of Canadian Pacific Airlines, and through his continuing escapades, Grant McConachie was an irrepressible figure. As an early bush pilot flying over the rugged and dangerous northland, his ebullient self-assurance, sheer force of personality, and luck, enabled a meteoric rise to the top.

Written in a well-paced and colourful style, this is an easy, absorbing read. Despite careful focus on McConachie, the result seems more a surface treatment than an analytical study. The book illustrates the effects of personal relationships and the force of personality in achieving success.

Markham, ON: PaperJacks Ltd.,
1973
[original 1972]

ISBN 0770102093

THE CHOSEN

Chaim Potok

The Chosen is a story of friendship that develops when two Jewish boys are rivals during a baseball game. Reuven Malter is an Orthodox Jew; Danny Saunders is a Hasidic Jew and oldest son of his sect's rebbi. In spite of their religious differences, the two develop a strong bond of love and friendship that is able to survive all adversity. The story not only revolves around their friendship, but also examines the difficulties faced when the desires of a child do not match the desires that parents and culture place on the individual. A central question of the novel is: Should the individual sacrifice personal desires to the aspirations of the community?

Students may require extensive background information on the differences between Orthodox and Hasidic Jews. Furthermore, students need to understand that the Hasidic Jews do not represent the mainstream of Jewish thought and belief.

This is an excellent novel for the study of character and how society helps define who and what an individual is.

> *"I went away and cried to the Master of the Universe. 'What have you done to me? A mind like this I need for a son? A heart I need for a son, a soul I need for a son, compassion I want from my son, righteousness, mercy, strength to suffer and carry pain, that I want from my son, not a mind without a soul!'" p. 264*

New York, NY: Fawcett
Crest, 1982
[original 1967]

ISBN 0449213447

CROW LAKE

Mary Lawson

> *"Love goes deeper than anything else, I guess. It gets to the core of you, and when Daniel got to the core of me I found that Matt and Luke and Bo were there too. They were part of me. In spite of years apart I still knew their faces better than my own. Anything I knew of love, I had learned from them."*
> *pp. 193–194*

Crow Lake is set in a northern Ontario farming community and the labs of University of Toronto. Narrator Kate Morrison is a zoologist in her late twenties who lives for her hero, her brother Matt. The book portrays realistic family battles and a painful past that gets in the way of Kate's relationship with another boy, Daniel. Eventually, Kate learns to change her views and becomes a survivor of sorts.

Lawson's novel is about misunderstandings, sibling love, repressed resentment, loyalty, emotional isolation, and surviving poverty and tragedy. *Crow Lake* will resonate for rural readers in particular, because of the setting and culture, but it has appeal for all students. It is a realistic and honest novel about family. It is ideal for teaching about character and conflict, and for generating both personal and critical responses. Teachers should be aware that this novel contains scenes of domestic violence and abuse, sexual relationships, and coarse language that may trouble some readers.

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada Ltd., 2003
Delta Book edition
[original 2002]
291 pages

ISBN 0-385-33763-9

DEATH AND DELIVERANCE

Robert Mason Lee

Death and Deliverance is about a military transport airplane that crashed on October 31, 1991, 10 miles short of its destination, Alert, North West Territories. Fourteen people survived the crash to face a bitter arctic storm with little protection. Hampered by weather and inadequate and outdated equipment, Canadian search and rescue technicians, or Sartechs, risked their own lives to save the survivors. A number of Edmontonians were involved in the crash and the rescue.

This intensely personal account reveals the thoughts, feelings and dreams of the survivors and their rescuers during the three tense days between leaving the south and arriving in Alert. The occasional use of vulgar language is realistic in time, character and situation. This easy-to-read survival story may be especially appealing to male students or to those who enjoy plentiful technical details.

> *"'My boys are going nuts back here. You've got to get us over the site. Those bastards are going to waltz in and beat us to it.'... Frigging Americans! ... Of course the Americans would get in. They had the technology. They'd pull off the most daring rescue in Canadian history, and his SARtechs would be bystanders."* p. 215

Toronto: MacFarlane Walter
& Ross, 1992

ISBN 0921912498

DOWNHILL CHANCE

Donna Morrissey

🍁

> *"'... I don't mean to make big of myself, Clair, for I'm no more than your father, carrying around a piece of hell as though it were separate from the other. But I've not lost sight of it, lovely, like your father did. He lost sight of his good and became caught in the other. And that's what killed him.'"* p. 397

Downhill Chance is the tale of the Osmonds and the Gales—two families in crisis, connected by love but torn apart by secrets and fears. Set in pre-Confederation Newfoundland during and after World War II, the book is a realistic comic melodrama about ordinary folk written in lively, informal, sensuous language. The book's colourful vocabulary (e.g., scroop, slouse) is a wonderful realization of Maritime–Canadian regionalism and dialect.

Downhill Chance is a long but lively book about passion, love, family secrets, childhood and maturity, good and evil, tragedy, optimism, and reconciliation. Students will find this a reasonable challenge yielding worthwhile insights into family, relationships and turning points.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.,
2002
Penguin Books edition
428 pages

ISBN 0–14–303360–3

ENDURANCE: SHACKLETON'S INCREDIBLE VOYAGE

Alfred Lansing

Written by a veteran journalist, ***Endurance*** is a gripping, intense and suspenseful read. Ernest Shackleton was the famous Antarctic explorer, whose boat, Endurance, became locked in ice, drifting until it was crushed. After five months of staying with the ship, the crew set out in lifeboats to head 850 miles to the nearest outpost. Incredibly, all of Shackleton's men were saved. This definitive, illustrated account is composed of diaries by team members and interviews with survivors.

Thematically, this book is about survival against tremendous odds and the importance of hope and determination in achieving survival. *Endurance* is also memorable for its accounts of the crew's boredom, hunger, lack of creature comforts, and numerous setbacks. The book contains some profane language within the historical context of the crew members' diaries.

This text can be easily supported by numerous other books and movies available on this popular topic. Students may be inspired to conduct Web searches or other research related to this remarkable story.

> *"They made a pitiable sight—three little boats, packed with odd remnants of what had once been a proud expedition, bearing twenty-eight suffering men in one final, almost ludicrous bid for survival. But this time there was to be no turning back, and they all knew it."*
> *p. 160*

New York, NY:
Carroll & Graf Publishers,
2002
Avalon edition
[original 1959]
280 pages

ISBN 0-7867-0621-X

FAHRENHEIT 451

Ray Bradbury

"Montag's hand closed like a mouth, crushed the book with wild devotion, with an insanity of mindlessness to his chest. The men above were hurling shovelfuls of magazines into the dusty air. They fell like slaughtered birds and the woman stood below, like a small girl, among the bodies.
Montag had done nothing. His hand had done it all, his hand, with a brain of its own, with a conscience and a curiosity in each trembling finger, had turned thief." p. 36

In ***Fahrenheit 451***, a speculative fiction work, the state controls all thinking. The general theme is that "Books are bad. Books are burned because books are ideas." The protagonist, Guy Montag, is a fireman whose job is to burn books. Complications arise in Montag's professional and personal life when, out of curiosity, he steals a book from a burning library and is subsequently denounced by his wife and workmates. He escapes to a faraway land where books are preserved in an amazing manner.

The ideology of state-controlled communication, as outlined by Montag's fire chief, Beatty, is closer to today's reality; e.g., information highways, than it was at the time Bradbury wrote the novel. The author equates freedom with the expansion of ideas through reading, writing and conversation.

The novel is an excellent example of social satire and should generate lively discussions by technologically astute students. Although the style is fairly simple, and the plot easily followed, the emphasis is on character study and the idea of individual choice.

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, 1981
[original 1953]

ISBN 0345294661

FALLEN ANGELS

Walter Dean Myers

In ***Fallen Angels***, Perry, a 17-year-old black youth, has no future in Harlem, and so enlists in the army to fight in the Vietnam war. He and his friend, Peewee, survive physically, but not before the horrors of war and the deaths of men, women and children embed themselves in their psyches. Disillusioned, Perry must find meaning in life. Realistic, harsh language reflects the violence and killing that is constantly questioned throughout the plot. The novel leads to philosophical reflections on war, as young soldiers yearn for the child within. Overcoming ethnic differences, political biases, religious beliefs, interpersonal relationships and racial hatreds are all components of the novel. However, concerns may arise when dealing with this well-written, compassionate novel. Teachers should be prepared for the controversial discussions and responses that this work may engender. Sensitivity to Vietnamese students in the classroom, school or community is strongly recommended. This is a powerful and moving novel. The composition, tempo, craft and rhythm are well-tuned and ring true. Although engrossing, fascinating and violently graphic, the male characters display blasphemy, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, despair and violent reactions within a war setting. This novel may be most appropriate for small group or individual study, or offered on an optional basis.

> *"The chopper came down and we handed up Lieutenant Carroll. A burnt offering. We didn't hand him up gently through the chopper doors, we pushed him as hard as we could. It was his life, but it was our lives as well. God have mercy.*
> *We all climbed on and the chopper tilted, jerked, and was off. The door gunner kept spraying the village as we moved off into the night."* p. 127

New York, NY: Scholastic Inc., 1988

ISBN 0590409433

Awards:

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1988

FINDING FISH: A MEMOIR

Antwone Quenton Fisher

"So here I am, in a chair sitting outside of his office, determined to be as nice as I can, thinking maybe he'll like me and think about keeping me. Inside, to myself, I make a promise, like a prayer, that if my father does keep me and I don't have to go back to the Picketts, I'll be good for the rest of my life." p. 90

Finding Fish is a searing memoir about an African–American orphan who survived emotional abandonment, sexual abuse, orphanages, reform school, and a cruel adoptive mother to join the navy and eventually become a well-known screenwriter and producer. Fisher was a sensitive, withdrawn, but intelligent and imaginative boy whose spirit remained unbroken despite his experiences. This book recounts how he developed strategies for survival and eventually assumed control of his life. There is redemption for the long-suffering Fisher as he moves from betrayal and abuse to liberation, manhood and success.

Finding Fish deals directly with delicate, controversial issues, and, remarkably, is narrated without self-pity. Well worth the emotional challenge of reading, this unflinching memoir may be the most memorable book that some students will study in high school. Teachers are advised to approach the book cautiously and to forewarn students about its emotional impact and content, including questionable language and references to foster care, race/ethnicity and sexuality. Some teachers may prefer to use *Finding Fish* as an individual or small group novel study.

New York, NY:
HarperCollins Publishers, 2001
Perennial edition
340 pages

ISBN 0–06–000778–8

FINDING FORRESTER

James W. Ellison

Finding Forrester is about Jamal, a sixteen-year-old South Bronx African–American basketball player who gets involved in the life of Forrester, a reclusive seventy-year-old Caucasian Pulitzer Prize writer. Jamal is a gifted teen with a private passion for reading and talent as a creative writer. As Forrester provides writing instruction and helps mentor Jamal through a snobby Manhattan prep school, the two form a close attachment despite their differences in colour and age.

This book is about friendship and acceptance. It also explores the dangers of cheating and the importance of education in improving one's life. *Finding Forrester* recognizes diversity and promotes respect; as such, it lends itself to personal response and decision-making activities. The text is a novel adaptation of the popular movie by the same name.

> *"He took a deep breath and cracked open the top notebook ... Notes filled the margins of every page. They were written in a tiny, precise hand, and the more Jamal studied them the more struck he was with their brilliance. The man had torn his work to shreds, and yet the care and insight that had gone into his critiques were signs to Jamal that his work had value." p. 39*

New York, NY:
Newmarket Press, 2000
192 pages

ISBN 1–55704–479–1

INTO THE WILD

Jon Krakauer

"The prevailing Alaska wisdom held that McCandless was simply one more dreamy half-cocked greenhorn who went into the country expecting to find answers to all his problems and instead found only mosquitoes and a lonely death." p. 72

Into the Wild is an eloquent nonfiction account of Chris McCandless, a well-to-do young man who 'dropped out' of society in 1992 and ended up dying in the Alaskan wilderness. McCandless is an unforgettable, somewhat likable character who gave his money to charity, abandoned his car, burned the cash in his wallet, and took on a new identity—that of Alexander Supertramp.

Krakauer, the author of *Into Thin Air*, first wrote an article on McCandless that was later expanded into this book. He traces the young man's travels, interviews people who knew Chris, includes Chris's journal entries and letters, and tells of parallel stories over the years before allowing the reader to pass final judgement on the victim. *Into the Wild* goes beyond one person's tragedy to look at why certain male individuals feel compelled to escape society and recklessly test themselves against nature.

Krakauer examines the effects of the wilderness on imagination and decision making and the blurring of the lines between dreams and reality. The fascinating psychological profile of the hiker will be of particular interest to students taking wilderness components of physical education classes and those who have camped out or lived in the wild. Infrequent coarse language used in context in the book should not be of a concern to English Language Arts 30-2 students.

Toronto, ON:
Random House of Canada,
1997
Anchor Books edition
[original 1996]
203 pages

ISBN 0-385-48680-4

JURASSIC PARK

Michael Crichton

In ***Jurassic Park***, Dr. Allan Grant and Dr. Ellie Sattler join other consultants and guests at a dinosaur theme island off the coast of Costa Rica. Dinosaurs have been cloned from Jurassic-era DNA, combined with more recent DNA from frogs. The resulting offspring develop overly aggressive characteristics leading to lots of excitement, adventure and violence, in which all the bad guys die, and all the good guys survive.

Although somewhat gruesome and violent, this futuristic novel should encourage extensive discussion on philosophical ideals, the implications of genetic and scientific research, the ethics of reproductive technology, dinosaurs, and ecosystems. These topics lend themselves to cross-curricular research, discussion or projects. The "Malcolm theory," named after one of the novel's scientists, provides a focus for moral and ethical discussions and observations. Either full class or small group study should elicit strong personal responses to this work.

> *"'Didn't bite it—twisted and ripped it. Just ripped his leg off.' Muldoon stood up, holding the severed leg upside down so the remaining blood dripped onto the ferns. His bloody hand smudged the white sock as he gripped the ankle. Gennaro felt sick again.*
> *'No question what happened,' Muldoon was saying. 'The T-rex got him.'"*
> *p. 222*

New York, NY: Ballantine
Books, 1991
[original 1990]

ISBN 0345370775

KEEPER 'N ME

Richard Wagamese

> *"... I lost touch with who I was pretty quick. Growing up in all-white homes, going to all-white schools, playing with all-white kids can get a guy to thinking and reacting all-white himself after a while. With no one pitching in any information I just figured I was a brown white guy."*
> *p. 12*

Keeper 'n Me is a positive story about an Aboriginal young man who finds redemption by returning to his cultural roots. When Garnet Raven was 3 years old he was removed from his home on an Ojibway reservation and placed in a series of foster homes. In his mid-teens, he escapes to the urban streets and ends up in jail at age twenty. While there, he receives a letter from his long-forgotten Aboriginal family, and decides to return to the reservation when he is released. Back on the reservation, Keeper, his grandfather and friend, becomes his personal mentor and spiritual conscience. As Keeper teaches him about the ways of the Ojibway—modern and ancient—Garnet finds peace and a sense of identity for the first time.

There are two narrators in this funny, poignant, mystical book: Garnet and Keeper, whose witty observations are printed in italics. Students will enjoy the odd, informal conversational tone of Keeper's sections and the relationship that forms between the young man and his grandfather. Most English Language Arts 30-2 classes will not have a problem with the book's minor and infrequent coarse language.

Wagamese's novel will entertain and inspire students as they explore issues around family, identity, values and decisions, and coming-of-age.

Toronto, ON: Random House
of Canada Ltd., n.d.
Doubleday Canada edition
[original 1993]
214 pages

ISBN 0-385-25452-0

KING RAT

James Clavell

King Rat depicts the life of British and American personnel in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. The key figure in the novel is "the King," an American corporal who manages to retain a standard of living envied by all other PoWs. The King is surrounded by countless underlings who both support and betray him. He has one friend, British Flight Lieutenant Peter Marlowe. The King's "greatest enemy" is L. Gary, Provost Marshall, a lonely fanatic who is determined to entrap him.

> *"'I suppose so,' Peter Marlowe replied. What an awful thing to say. He was hurt by the King and did not understand that the American mind is simple in some things, as simple as the English mind. An American is proud of his money-making capacity, rightly so. An Englishman, such as Peter Marlowe, is proud to get killed for the flag. Rightly so." p. 181*

Clavell carefully describes the highly structured nature of a PoW camp and the British concern with "class." These descriptions parallel one another and are used to advantage to reveal the individuals who manipulate the system. The incidents that make up the story help to develop the idea that survival requires adaptation.

Some of the characters use colloquial language that may, at times, be considered offensive. However, the setting is a prisoner of war camp, and the language used realistically reflects these circumstances. The transvestite Clavell writes about is sympathetically portrayed. Women, as in most war stories, are presented in traditional and subservient roles. This novel may be most appropriate for mature readers in small group or individual study.

New York, NY: Dell
Publishing, 1982
[original 1962]

ISBN 0440145465

LETTERS FROM WINGFIELD FARM

Dan Needles

> *"'Go play farmer for the summer,' he said, 'and tell me in October what you're going to do, with the rest of your life. And leave that dumb hat at home next time you come down for a board meeting.'*
> *He's got a point. I do have to decide where I belong. I like the life here all right but it seems that trying to farm these days means taking a vow of poverty. Especially the way I do it."* p. 105

In ***Letters from Wingfield Farm***, Walt Wingfield leaves his position as board chairman of a Toronto brokerage house to take over the "old Fisher place" on Rural Route 1, Persephone County. He begins to farm his newly acquired 100-acre plot as a philosopher–farmer. He believes he can establish an economically viable operation based on sound, big business principles, while using only horse-drawn equipment.

In his attempt to become one with the land, Walt encounters many of the well-established locals. Two neighbours in particular, a dour, inarticulate auctioneer, and an old horse trainer, provide colourful characterization in vignettes about Walt's mishaps as a farmer.

Wingfield's Pyrrhic victories are chronicled with wit in the form of letters to the editor of the local newspaper. By the end of the novel, Walt's letters reflect a respect and appreciation for his new life and friends, and reveal his emerging self-awareness. Although humorous, Walt's growth is no less important or evocative.

The letter format of this novel can provide students with a refreshing approach to journal writing. The main character laughs at himself and his mishaps, and invites the reader to do the same. Rich in irony, understatement and dramatic pacing, the work is valuable as a study of dramatic character presentation and the vignette format.

Toronto, ON: Seal Books,
1989

ISBN 0770423868

MEDICINE RIVER

Thomas King

With ***Medicine River***, Thomas King has created a tongue-in-cheek account of the inhabitants and the social structure of Medicine River. The protagonist, Will, returns to a small Blackfoot community in southern Alberta to sort out the details of his mother's death. This return to his roots stirs many long-buried issues from his childhood and forces him to confront his true values. His encounter with Harlen Bigbear results in a series of events which direct his life and affairs into otherwise unconsidered directions. He opens the only Native photography shop in Medicine River and agrees to compile the band directory. This project is the framework for Will's encounter with the Native population. A progression of escapades—sometimes painful, often hilarious—brings Will to an understanding of his own identity and commitments.

> *"'People like that,' said Elwood, 'don't shoot themselves. Shit. Only mistake Jake made was turning his back on January. That women's liberation's what's doing it. Fellow puts a woman in her place once in a while don't give her any call to shoot him. Hell, we'd all be dead.'"* p. 50

The characters in this novel are warm and engaging, and the story line is lighthearted without being predictable. Will's quest to understand himself is universal, in spite of his unique experiences. Life in Medicine River exposes dilemmas and contradictions that exist in many small Alberta towns.

This novel is written in a clear, forthright manner and contains enough good character dialogue and plot intrigue to hold student interest. Often, the personal stories are painful and touching, but there is an overriding sense of humour and optimism to the work, which leaves the reader with a sense of compassion for and understanding of the characters and an appreciation of Native culture.

Toronto, ON: Penguin
Books Canada Ltd., 1991
[original 1989]

ISBN 0140126031

Awards:

Writer's Guild of Alberta Best Novel Award, 1990

NO GREAT MISCHIEF

Alistair MacLeod

> *"Sometimes my brothers played their battered violins themselves. And sometimes we hummed or sang the old Gaelic songs. And when we talked, often in Gaelic, it was mostly of the past and of the distant landscape which was our home."* p. 146

No Great Mischief is described by critics as MacLeod's masterpiece. This gentle-humoured novel is a love letter to the author's native Cape Breton. The narrator, Alexander MacDonald, is an Ontario orthodontist who goes to Toronto to help his alcoholic older brother, Calum. The two eventually drive to their beloved Cape Breton to join their family members working in a mine, where they encounter the conflict between Cape Bretoners and French Canadians.

Along the way, Alex relates a 200-year cross-generational saga that traces his family from Scotland to the New World. Alex, it turns out, was orphaned at age three, along with his twin sister, when both parents fell through the ice near their home. His three much older brothers were already on their own, while the twins were raised by their grandparents. Now, Alex, Calum (who seems to carry the legacy of the original, tragedy-stricken Calum MacDonald) and their sister are all haunted by the links between their family and the past.

This novel explores themes of family, love, loyalty, identity, and the influence of history. Students will enjoy the stories of loggers, miners, drinkers, exiles and adventurers, but the book also contains beautiful haunting scenes depicting the sadness of human beings. There are numerous references to violence, ethnic loyalty and sexual behaviour that may be disturbing to some students or community members. Examples of coarse language are incidental and appropriate to the context of the novel. This book might create student interest in telling anecdotes of their own about family and family pride.

Toronto, ON: McClelland &
Stewart, 2001
Emblem edition
[original 1999]
283 pages

ISBN 0-7710-5570-6

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich tells of survival in a Siberian camp for political prisoners. Ivan Denisovich depends upon his shrewdness and skills as a mason to survive. Solzhenitsyn introduces Ivan at 5 o'clock on a cold winter morning, and the reader follows him through a typical day. In Ivan's life, the overriding factor is self-preservation.

The novel is short and easy to read. Its apparent simplicity is deceptive. Based on Solzhenitsyn's own experiences, Ivan becomes a type of "Everyman" in a novel whose main theme is the overwhelming impulse and courage of the human spirit to survive. The book is not depressing in tone, in spite of the rigours and privations of a prison camp.

> *"In all the time he spent in camps and prisons, Ivan Denisovich had gotten out of the habit of worrying about the next day, or the next year, much less how to feed his family. The fellows at the top thought of everything for him, and it was kind of easier like that. Winter after winter, summer after summer—he still had a long time to go."*
> *p. 147*

London, England:
Heinemann Educational
Books Ltd., 1974
[original 1963]

ISBN 0435122002

THE PIANIST: THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY OF ONE MAN'S SURVIVAL IN WARSAW: 1939–1945

Wladyslaw Szpilman

> *"I was now alone in this quarter of the city. The SS were visiting the building where I was hiding more and more often. How long could I survive in these conditions? A week? Two weeks?" p. 164*

The Pianist, long suppressed by the Polish government, is a Holocaust memoir of life in under Nazi occupation. Dodging arrest and certain death in increasingly desperate circumstances, the author, a successful concert pianist and composer, was fortunate to receive unexpected compassion from a German soldier. Set entirely in the Warsaw ghetto, this unusual take on the Holocaust documents humanity's primordial survival instinct and reveals the power of music to keep people's hopes and spirits alive in dangerous times.

A quick read, *The Pianist* is written in an understated, detached manner that emphasizes both the horror and the banal details of life in the ghetto. The book includes descriptions of the horrors of the Holocaust including suicide as a choice people made to escape the atrocities of war. The memoir also includes excerpts from the German officer's wartime journal and an epilogue on Szpilman's life after the war.

Toronto, ON:
McArthur & Company, 2000
[original 1946]
222 pages

ISBN 1–55278–142–9

SIDDHARTHA

Hermann Hesse

Siddhartha traces the life of a young Indian man, Siddhartha, as he embarks on a spiritual quest. Throughout his journey, he struggles with worldly materialism, sensuous pleasures and inner conflicts of spiritual truth.

The novel's rich imagery and numerous allusions to the life of Buddha will provide the skilled, more mature student with exposure to an Eastern philosophy. This work, however, should not be construed as a document for teaching about Buddhism.

The novel is most suitable for small groups of mature students who may wish to explore the quest motif, the metaphor of life as a journey, the difficult and elusive nature of wisdom and truth, and the complexity of the imperfections of humankind.

"And he thought: It was the Self, the character and nature of which I wished to learn. I wanted to rid myself of the Self, to conquer it, but I could not conquer it, I could only deceive it, could only fly from it, could only hide from it. Truly, nothing in the world has occupied my thoughts as much as the Self, this riddle, that I live, that I am one and am separated and different from everybody else, that I am Siddhartha; and about nothing in the world do I know less than about myself, about Siddhartha." p. 31

New York, NY: New
Directions Publishing
Corporation, 1957
[original 1922]

ISBN 081120068X

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Robert A. Heinlein

> *"There are a dozen different ways of delivering destruction in impersonal wholesale, via ships and missiles of one sort or another, catastrophes so widespread, so unselective that the war is over because that nation or planet ceased to exist. What we do is entirely different. We make war as personal as a punch in the nose."* p. 99

Starship Troopers is a science fiction classic in which the narrator Johnnie, a young recruit in the future, signs up with the Terran Mobile Infantry of the Federal Reserve. He is determined to make the grade at grueling boot camp. As he trains to fight the enemy Klendathu, and later goes off to war, Johnnie learns why he is a soldier. The war scenes and technology of this 1959 novel are still plausible even without the modern details. The appeal of the book lies in the ideas and moral philosophy rather than a fast paced plot.

The main theme of this controversial book is the conflict between individual freedom and government control. Secondary themes concern citizenship, duty and responsibility, and crime and punishment. This thoughtful, readable novel will invite discussions about the relationships between individuals and society; values and choices; good and evil; and conformity and rebellion. This is an 'idea book' for students to relate and respond to critically. Teachers should be aware of two issues: inappropriate language and disrespectful references to people with disabilities.

Note: This novel should not be confused with the movie of the same name.

New York, NY:
Berkley Publishers
Group/Penguin Putnam, Inc.,
1987
Ace Books edition
[original 1959]
264 pages

ISBN 0-441-78358-9

THE SUSPECT

L. R. Wright

In ***The Suspect***, George Wilcox, at the age of 80, commits the near-perfect crime. The murder happens quickly, quietly, and very unexpectedly, in a small town on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. This unusual turn in George's life would have gone undetected had his conscience not started to bother him. The suspense mounts as George befriends the local librarian, Cassandra Mitchell, and her new boyfriend, Karl Alberg, the local RCMP Staff Sergeant. Together, these three find themselves on a collision course of conflicting values and loyalties.

> *"Alberg wondered if she knew they had been brothers-in-law. If so, she wasn't telling him. He found this mildly distressing, even though he hadn't convinced himself yet that the old relationship between the two men had anything to do with Burke's death. Cassandra looked at the irises. ... She heard it again: He got exactly what was coming to him. She had never heard George Wilcox say anything so unfeeling. It must have been the shock, she thought." p. 60*

This Canadian mystery allows for the study of characterization, plot development and foreshadowing. Also, the examination of right and wrong could lead to interesting response journal writing, character analysis and the examination of points of view. Students may need help with vocabulary, particularly at the beginning of the book.

Teachers should be aware of blasphemy and scenes of domestic violence, which may be distressing to some students. However, the depiction of such violence provides a classroom opportunity to discuss the issue of domestic violence, its traumatic causes and effects.

Toronto, ON: Seal Books,
1986
[original 1985]

ISBN 07704421229

Awards:

Edgar Allan Poe Award,
Mystery Writers of America,
1986

SWITCHBACKS: TRUE STORIES FROM THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Sid Marty

> *"I like the Kid's cockiness. In fact, I distrust any young bush ape who isn't a bit on the cocky side. Boundary patrol is no place for weenies."*
> *p. 11*

Switchbacks is a collection of fourteen mountain tales and a glossary of related terms, written by a veteran Alberta poet and climber. Using his own memories and those of others, the author presents a variety of experiences—some tragic, others humourous or redemptive—to create this colourful collection.

Marty's main purpose is to bring readers closer to the unique stories of people who climb mountains. In the process, he explores thoughts, feelings and experiences familiar to all Alberta nature-lovers. The book also contains selections about coming-of-age, apprenticeship, and the influence of mountains on people.

Switchbacks invites both personal and creative response work. Teachers should be aware of the book's coarse language, descriptions of careless alcohol use, and critical references to operations in the National Parks.

Toronto, ON:
McClelland & Stewart, 2001
[original 1999]
316 pages

ISBN 0-7710-5670-2

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE: AN OLD MAN, A YOUNG MAN, AND LIFE'S GREATEST LESSON

Mitch Albom

Tuesdays with Morrie is an enriching memoir about a teacher–student relationship. After a long separation, Albom becomes reacquainted with his former sociology professor, Morrie Schwartz, who by then is terminally ill. The two begin visiting every Tuesday to talk about youth, aging, fear, forgiveness and numerous other topics reflecting life's complexity. The flashback-flashforward structure alternates between the time when the younger Albom was in Morrie's class and the time of their weekly visits.

Through these discussions, the book shares wisdom, insights, valuable lessons in living, and the common desire to form a philosophy of life that transcends the fact of mortality. The book is moving without being sentimental or self-pitying, and maintains a humourous tone despite its serious subject matter.

This short-sentenced page-turner will remind students of mentors from their own past and will probably stimulate personal anecdote writing. Very minor incidental coarse language adds realism and is appropriate to the situations. Teachers should be aware that the subject matter could be sensitive for students who have experienced the serious illness or death of a family member or friend.

> *"He repeated it carefully, pausing for effect. 'Love is the only rational act.' I nodded, like a good student, and he exhaled weakly. I leaned over to give him a hug. And then, although it is not really like me, I kissed him on the cheek. I felt his weakened hands on my arms, the thin stubble of his whiskers brushing on my face. 'So you'll come back next Tuesday?' he whispered."*

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WALKING WITH THE GREAT APES: JANE GOODALL, DIAN FOSSEY, BIRUTÉ GALDIKAS

Sy Montgomery

"Although no fighting erupted over access to Flo, all the males seemed almost frantic with fear that she might walk away and they would lose another opportunity to mate with her: they would follow her every movement with eager, hungry eyes. For nearly six weeks she was followed everywhere by this retinue of up to fourteen males. One day Jane counted Flo copulating fifty times." p. 30

Walking with the Great Apes is about Jane Goodall's work with the chimpanzees of Gombe; Dian Fossey's defence of the mountain gorillas of Risande; and Biruté Galdikas' study of orangutans in Borneo. It presents a composite picture of three women who forge careers through their study of primates. While this book portrays the work of these women, it also compares the different psychological characteristics of each researcher and is, therefore, as much a perceptive study of the women as it is of the primates.

Different perspectives can be obtained from reading this book. From one point of view, three admirable women scientists are presented as role models and innovative leaders in their field. Also, it can be viewed as a perceptive and insightful portrait of feminist ideas. From another point of view, the book could be interpreted as extreme and bizarre, and illustrative of a spiritual relationship with animals that could be defined as animistic, or possibly even shamanistic. While there are images of death, sexuality and violence, a study of this nonfiction book could give students insight into various ways of seeing, understanding and appreciating others, especially those with different cultures, religious and belief systems. It might be best offered on an optional basis.

This book is a fascinating read for a wide range of student abilities and interests. Further reading on environmentalism and interaction with nature could easily follow.

New York, NY: Houghton
Mifflin Company, 1991

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